

MICHELE BACCI

the mystic cave



Convivia I

Editorial board / Hans Belting, Klára Benešová, Ivan Foletti (dir.), Herbert Kessler, Serena Romano, Elisabetta Scirocco

Executive editors / Karolina Foletti, Martin Lešák, Adrien Palladino, Veronika Tvrzníková

Typesetting / Anna Kelblová, Kristýna B. Marešová
Cover design / Anna Kelblová

Publishers / Masarykova univerzita,
Žerotínovo nám. 9, 601 77 Brno, IČO 00216224
& Viella editrice, via delle Alpi 32, I – 00198 Roma
Editorial Office / Seminář dějin umění,
Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity,
Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno
Print by / ASTRON studio CZ, a.s.; Green Park,
Veselská 699, 199 00 Praha 9

E-mail / convivium@earlymedievalstudies.com

© 2017 Filozofická fakulta Masarykovy univerzity
© 2017 Viella s.r.l.

Published / March 2017
ISBN 978-88-6728-819-9

the mystic cave

A History of the Nativity
Church in Bethlehem

MICHELE BACCI



Center for
Early Medieval Studies
West | Byzantium | Islam



Seminář
dějin
umění

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Acknowledgments	16

Chapter I: The Beginnings and the First *Mise-en-Scène*

2nd ————— 6th Centuries

Experiencing the Holy in a Cave	21
The Birth of Jesus' Birthplace	26
The First <i>Mise-en-Scène</i> of the Holy Cave (ca. 330 – End of the Sixth Century)	34
The Church of Constantine and Helena	39
The Earliest Decoration of the Church Interior	46
The Nativity Church and its Topographic Network	51

Chapter II: The Second *Mise-en-Scène*

6th ————— 11th Centuries

Destruction and Reconstruction in the Sixth Century	59
Most Noble Apses and Glittering Columns	68
The Superposition of Sacred Space and Holy Site	79
Site-Bound Religious Experience in a New Setting	84
Visual Markers in the Church Decorum	90
The Bethlehem Masjid: The New Setting of the South Transept Under Islamic Rule	96
The Myth of Bethlehem in the Latin West	102
Bethlehem Under Fatimid Rule	106

Chapter III: The Third *Mise-en-Scène* Under Latin Rule

11th ————— 12th Centuries

The Crusaders in Bethlehem and the Latin Appropriation of the Holy Site	113
The First Painted Decorum	124
A Byzantine-Latin "Joint Venture"	136
Master Ephraim and his Workshop	144
The Decoration Program of the Nave	151
Mosaics in the East End	184
Embellishing the Holy Cave	198

Chapter IV: Protected by God: The Nativity Church from Saladin's Conquest to the Present Day

12th ————— 20th Centuries

Saladin, the Second Latin Rule (1229–1244), and a New Phase of Pilgrimage	207
Expanding the Topographic Network (Late Thirteenth to Early Sixteenth Centuries)	220
From the Mamlukes to the Ottomans	237
Epilogue	263
Bibliography	276
Index	310

Introduction

The Nativity church in Bethlehem, one of the oldest and most eminent monuments of the Holy Land, stands out not only for its memorial and cultic importance in Christian tradition, which locates there the site of the Incarnated Son of God's birth and first days of life, but also for the excellent quality of its architecture and decoration. The sumptuousness of the building erected above the hallowed cave where Christ was first incarnate was often regarded as a distinctive mark, and in some way even a miraculous sign of God's special grace, by the many pilgrims who visited the holy place in the course of sixteen centuries. At least from the post-Crusader period, it has been evident to all travelers to Palestine that the Nativity church had something special: unlike other *loca sancta*, which had lost their original beauty, it still preserved its lavish, shining ornaments and could therefore be viewed as properly glorifying the sacred event that was known to have taken place in that very spot.

Still nowadays, visitors from all the countries of the world cross the western courtyard |FIG. 1|, enter the church through the "Door of Humility" which obliges them to bend down to access the vestibule |FIG. 2|, go through the wooden Armenian door |FIG. 64|, pass through the central nave with its elegant colonnades and remnants of murals and mosaics |FIG. 3|, before thronging in the south transept to access the Nativity cave |FIG. 4|. The experience of the latter



I | The west courtyard looking east, Nativity church, Bethlehem

| FIG. 5 | is what most modern visitors, like their medieval and modern predecessors, actually long for: they are eager to kneel before and kiss the site of Jesus' birth, which is associated with a hole located below the altar table on the marble pavement of the eastern, apse-like niche | FIG. 6 |. Shortly thereafter, they pay homage to the manger, which can be seen in the nearby, slightly lower southern grotto | FIGS 7–8 |. Everything here looks tiny, small, and dark: visitors are encouraged mentally to contrast the humbleness of the site chosen by the Son of God as His birthplace with the splendor of the upper church, where the Christian community gathers to perform the liturgy and renew its ties with God. The semantic tension between the material *locus sanctus* and the sacred, or congregational, space constructed above it and working as a sort of monumental frame to the memorial spots of Christ's birth is at the core of this book: emphasis will be laid on the different visual and spatial strategies that

helped to orientate and shape the pilgrim's mental approach to the holy site and enhance the perception of it as especially worship-worthy. Questions will be posed as to whether, and to what extent, the sense of beauty elicited by the basilica's luxury ornaments could efficaciously interact with the experience of the site-bound sanctity associated with the underground cave.

This is indeed the proper time to investigate such issues. The Basilica has suffered from a long period of neglect, when it was frequently hostage to the paralyzing set of regulations, known as *status quo*, which define the respective rights of the Greek Orthodox, the Armenians, and the Latins of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land in the final form established in Sultan Abdülmecid I's firman from 1852 and later confirmed by the Treaties of Paris (1856), Berlin (1878), and Versailles (1919). Given that for many centuries the official permission to make repairs to the building was regarded by each of the communities as a way to assert their *praedominium*, or hegemonic role in the holy site, the compromise found in the nineteenth century fixed the duties and properties of the three groups in a very precise way.¹ Extremely meticulous procedures were established even for ordinary maintenance and cleaning of each single portion of the building. Here below is an instructive example concerning the Armenian transept, as described by the former Ottoman official Abdullah Effendi Kardus at the request of the British Mandatory Government in 1929:

The procedure for the cleaning of this part of the Church is very complicated. The roof beams and walls down to, but not including, the cornice, and to a similar level in places where the cornice does not exist, are all to be cleaned by the Orthodox. Where on the west wall of the North Transept a thinner wall is

I | See especially Cohen 2011, with previous literature.

built on, the Orthodox sweep the sloping part. For the purpose of cleaning, the Orthodox place steps on the floor of the Armenian Chapel, but do not lean a ladder against the wall. The cornice and walls below the level of the cornice, are cleaned by the Armenians. The three windows in the Armenian Chapel under the level of the cornice are cleaned with their window recesses by the Government. The northern face of the Grotto is cleaned by the Government. The pictures in the northern face of the Grotto are to be removed, the eastern one by the Orthodox, and the western one by the Armenians, and to be rehung by them. The pillar west of the Grotto entrance is cleaned on the south-west, south-east and north-west sides by the Orthodox, and on the north-east side by the Government [...].²

It is not difficult to understand that both maintenance and the making of major restorations could arouse difficulties in such a context. The *status quo* implied that nothing could start without a unanimous agreement of the three groups, which was made hard, if not impossible, by mutual suspicions and rivalries. The situation was further complicated by the ordinance issued in 1920 by the British Mandate for Palestine that set up a new Department of Antiquities. Whereas the latter had the duty to approve all repairs to historical buildings, it was in no position to provide any financial assistance and the religious communities were given sole responsibility for the conservation of the holy sites. Problems arose periodically, as e.g. in 1926, when the Latins and Armenians attempted to share the costs for some urgent repairs to the roof, but were prevented by the Greeks, who exercised in this way their rights of proprietorship on the upper parts of the building, as established by the *status quo*.³

The outcome of this situation was that the Basilica was frozen in the shape received after the last significant restoration, dating back to 1842, and very little was done to counter the structural problems of the roof – already mentioned as early as the fifteenth century⁴ – and the deterioration of mosaics and column paintings,



2 | The "Door of Humility", Nativity church, Bethlehem

with the only exception of Gustav Kühnel's cleaning campaign in the early 1980s.⁵ This had also significant repercussions on scholarship: the debate about such crucial issues as the chronology of the different building phases or the dating and meaning of the mosaic decoration was hampered by the *de facto* impossibility of performing technical investigations of any kind in the church interior. Some archaeological soundings were possible only in 1934, when the Department of Antiquities of the British Mandatory Government appointed the architect William Harvey to make a survey

2 Cust 1929, p. 56.

3 *Ibidem*, pp. 39–40; Cohen 2011.

4 Bacci 2015, p. 44

5 Kühnel 1984; Kühnel 1987; Keshman 2013.

of the building and determine the structural repairs necessary to prevent some important parts from collapsing. Such interventions were never undertaken, yet the archaeological analyses provided some new grounds for the interpretation of the architectural history of the church; these have long been debated and still provide the most important source of information about the earliest building erected in Constantine's times. Unfortunately, the soundings made by the British were incomplete: they began in April 1934, concerned only some parts of the nave, the north transept and part of the choir and were quickly carried out in order to have the church floor repaved in time for the celebrations of Christmastime.⁶

Our partial knowledge, which is largely due to this complicated situation, is reflected by the lack of systematic studies on this building, despite the centuries-old perception of it as a monumental frame to an outstandingly important holy site, and its privileged status as the only Palestinian church from the Early Christian and Byzantine period to have escaped major destructions in the course of its long history. Surprisingly enough, the last comprehensive book on Bethlehem in English dates from 1910 and the last one in French from 1914, hence prior to the 1934 excavations.⁷ In German, the only title available is Edmund Weigand's Ph.D. dissertation on the alleged Constantinian architecture of the building, published in 1911.⁸ Later on, the scientific engagement of the archaeological school associated with the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land gave birth, in 1952, to Bellarmino Bagatti's *Gli antichi edifici sacri di Betlemme*, which is still an indispensable reference work for any study of the Basilica: yet in this case the approach was basically archaeological, even if it provided an exceptionally rich documentation which proves useful also for historians and art historians.⁹ Other publications in book-form included guides meant for cultivated visitors, some of which stood out for their extremely accurate and informative texts.¹⁰

For the rest, research was focused on specific aspects of Bethlehem history and the outcomes of such studies were published as articles in scientific periodicals and multi-authored books, as well as chapters or paragraphs of monographic works written in different languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Polish, and Russian. Literature is very abundant, yet also much scattered: the site was investigated from the viewpoint of New Testament and Biblical studies (it can be said that the first modern study was provided in the seventeenth century by a theologian such as Francesco Quaresmi),¹¹ history and art history of Early Christianity, the Crusader period and modern times, Armenian studies, Byzantine studies, medieval Western studies, building engineering and restoration theory, archaeology, architectural history and historical topography.¹²

One of the basic problems with this wide range of studies is that they often did not interact with each other. This was due not only to the academic divisions which often obstruct any dialogue among the disciplines, but also to the linguistic barriers which prevented some scholars from getting access to part of the available bibliography: it is regrettable, for example, that some important historical arguments were taken into account only in German literature and almost entirely neglected in the work of non-German researchers.¹³ The investigation of written sources is also problematic in many respects: most unusually for medieval monuments, scholars can avail themselves, in their study

6 Harvey 1935. Cf. also Themelis 1934; Vincent 1935.

7 Weir Schultz 1910; Vincent/Abel 1914.

8 Weigand 1911.

9 Bagatti 1952. On Bagatti's outstanding work as archaeologist cf. Piccirillo 2002a, pp. 140–176, sp. pp. 154–157 on his work at Bethlehem; cf. also his bibliography: *Ibidem*, pp. 177–194.

10 Hamilton 1947; Petrozzi 1985; Rapp 2015; Compri/Bolognesi/Orlandi 2016.

11 Quaresmi 1639.

12 See the bibliography at the end of this book.

13 As remarked by Weiland 1998, p. 819.

of Bethlehem, of an extremely large number of texts dating from the very beginnings (including pre-Constantinian times) up to the present day. The most important information is provided by the numberless travelogues by pilgrims from across Europe and the Mediterranean world who visited the Nativity cave in the course of many centuries: yet, whereas the earliest sources from the Early Christian period until the thirteenth century were properly published and frequently reproduced, we still often rely on non-philological, old-fashioned editions and even manuscripts when we have to deal with post-medieval materials.¹⁴

This book does not pretend to provide any new comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the history and materiality of the Nativity church. I am proposing here to look at this monument from a specific viewpoint, which combines the traditional art historical analyses of architecture and monumental decorations with a specific focus on the cultic agency of the holy site, the latter's involvement in pilgrimage and devotional practices and its shifting visual and spatial interaction with the upper church. In other words, it provides a general survey of previous research and a reassessment of its two-thousand-years history, with a focus on Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, whereas, for the sake of brevity, the post-Crusader period is treated in a more sketchy way. Furthermore, this text specifically analyses the ways in which the exuberant furnishings and décors of the Basilica helped to frame and orientate the perception of the site-specific holiness located in the underground cave.

In this sense, this work is intended for both scholars and anybody interested in the history of pilgrimage, the Palestinian *loca sancta*, and Early Christian, Byzantine and medieval arts. Furthermore, I hope that my work may promote knowledge of this long neglected monument and hence, if only indirectly, contribute to the rebirth of the Nativity church. It must be stressed that today

the Basilica is gradually coming back to life thanks to a new, ongoing conservation project, which has finally overcome the long-lasting stalemate of the *status quo*. First of all, relations among the three communities have much improved and have been enhanced by ecumenical dialogue. Secondly, the Palestinian government actively engaged in promoting a mutual agreement and undertook a coordinating role in 2009 by setting up a specific Presidential Committee for the restoration of the Nativity church.

A consortium team of experts, including engineers, architects, restorers, experts in the material analysis of architectural structure and building materials, archaeologists, and the present author as art historical consultant, was appointed in 2010 to make a new, thorough survey of the building with the purpose of assessing the most urgent repairs to be done and working out a comprehensive restoration project. The latter started in September 2013 and is still ongoing: it first concerned the roof, windows, narthex, and doors, and in 2015 it was also extended to the mosaic decoration.¹⁵ Meanwhile, following the admission of Palestine as full

14 Useful collections of sources are provided, for the Early Christian, Byzantine and Crusader periods, by Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, cols 927–1013; Tobler 1874; Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885; Koikilides/Fokydiides 1912; Baldi 1955; Geyer et al. 1965; De Sandoli 1978–1984; Huygens 1994. Throughout this book, I made exclusive use of the original texts, with only a few exceptions. The reader should be advised, anyway, that collections of translated texts in English are also available, even if they are not always reliable: Wilkinson 1977; Wilkinson 1988; Pringle 2012. Also problematic is Khitrowo's collection of Russian pilgrims' travelogues in French translation (Khitrowo 1889). For the post-Crusader period, there is a collection of Greek *proskynetaria* published by Kadas 1986 and some other of German and Italian travelogues (Feyerabend 1584; Röhricht/Meisner 1880; Schmid 1957; Lanza/Troncarelli 1990; Herz/Huschenbett/Szczesny 1998). For the rest, I availed myself of materials collected in the wider frame of the research project *Von Venedig zum Heiligen Land. Ausstattung und Wahrnehmung von Pilgerorten an der Mittelmeerküste (1300–1550)*, coordinated by myself at Fribourg University with the financial support of the Swiss National Fund. Lists of modern pilgrims' travelogues to the Holy Land are provided by Röhricht 1890; Schur 1980; Ganz-Blätter 1990; Külzer 1994; Gómez-Géraud 1999; Paravicini 1999–2001; Vingopoulou 2004; Noonan 2007.

15 See the documentation at the official website of the Presidential Committee for the restoration of the Nativity church [<http://www.nativityrestoration.ps/>, retrieved on 31 July 2016]. A detailed report on the restoration works is going to be published in a monographic work edited by Claudio Alessandri.



3 | View of the interior looking east, Nativity church, Bethlehem

member of UNESCO in 2011, the Bethlehem complex was added to the World Heritage List in June 2012.¹⁶ Finally, the positive experience in the case of the basilica became a source of inspiration for similar initiatives in other Holy Land sites: most notably, a similar agreement was recently found for the aedicule of Christ's tomb in the Jerusalem Holy Sepulchre.¹⁷

In the near future, the outcomes of this restoration campaign will enormously contribute to our better understanding of the Nativity church and its history. Art historians have much to learn from restoration works and, on the other hand, much can come out of a fruitful intellectual exchange among restorers, architects, engineers, and art historians, like that which takes place daily on the scaffoldings of the basilica. It is not my aim here to give an account of the recent new discoveries in the basilica: an accurate report on the works, their achievements and methodology will soon be provided by a forthcoming monograph. The present book is



4 | Pilgrims at the south entrance to the Nativity cave, Nativity church, Bethlehem

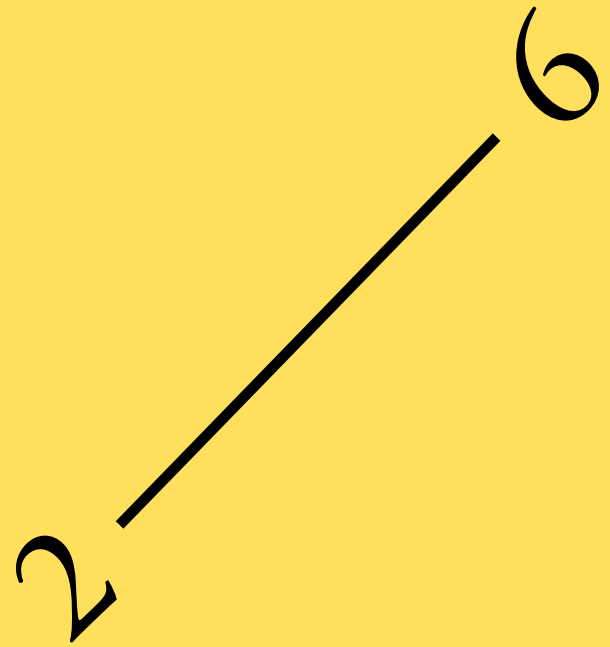
rather to be understood as the outcome of my personal fascination for this outstanding monument which started in 2009, during a visit in the company of Prof. Gustav Kühnel, and was enhanced in the following year by my somewhat unexpected involvement in the conservation project. Even if it is primarily meant for everybody interested in the history of the Nativity church and the artistic, spatial, and figurative strategies used in the course of time to materialize its sanctity, this text should also be intended as a personal contribution to the ongoing rediscovery of the building and as a fieldwork tool which may be of some assistance for the many questions that will be aroused by the team's day-to-day physical contact with the building and its exceptional decoration.

¹⁶ See the documentation at the UNESCO website [<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1433/documents/>, and especially *Birthplace of Jesus* 2011, both retrieved on 31 July 2016].

¹⁷ Beaulieu/Friedman 2016.

My warmest thanks are due, first of all, to the members of the Presidential Committee for the restoration of the Nativity church for their encouragement. I would also like to express my gratitude to the three communities ruling the basilica, namely the reverend fathers of the Greek monastery and Orthodox Bishopric of Bethlehem, the reverend fathers of the Armenian monastery, and the reverend fathers of the Franciscan convent. My special thanks are due to H. E. Minister Ziad al-Bandak, Imad Nassar, Afif Tweme, and Issa Murra, as well as to the friends and colleagues of the consortium team, namely Claudio Alessandri, Giovanna Bianchi, Stefano Campana, Elisabetta Concina, Spiridione Alessandro Curuni, Giuseppe Fichera, Giorgio Frunzio, Vincenzo Mallardo, Nicola Santopuoli with their collaborators. I am also much obliged to Marcello and Giammarco Piacenti, Susanna Sarmati, Domenico Nucatolo and all members of the Bethlehem restoration team for our conversations on the scaffoldings and at the Casanova restaurant, which were so instructive to me. I am also much grateful to Ivan Foletti for his incessant incentive to the making of this book and to Elisabeth Dutton for her reading and revision of my English text. Thanks are due also to several colleagues who wanted to share their ideas on Bethlehem with me: the late regretted Gustav Kühnel, Father Eugenio Alliata, Father Enrique Bermejo, Elizabeth Bolman, Beat Brenk, Bianca Kühnel, Manuel Castiñeiras, Kevork Hintlian, Annette Hoffman, Armen Khazarian, Liz James, Jaroslav Folda, Maria Lidova, Simone Piazza, Brigitte Roux, Maria Vassilaki, Marco Verità, and Gerhard Wolf. My best thanks are also due to Thomas Kaffenberger, Vanessa Zurmühle, Angela Schiffhauer, Évelyne Perriard, Alexandre Varela, Gohar Grigoryan, Sophia Zoitou, and Argyri Dermizaki for their assistance. Last but not least, a thankful thought goes to my wife Barbara and my children Flavio Valerio and Ludovico Antonio for their support and patience.

Chapter I



The Beginnings and the First *Mise-en-Scène* 2nd–6th Centuries

EXPERIENCING THE HOLY IN A CAVE

In Bethlehem there is a church on the site where Christ was born, known as Saint Mary: it is so beautiful, that I never saw another one so nice, so lavishly decorated, so magnificent in its columns and rich in paintings as this one in Bethlehem, which is taken as worthy of worship everywhere in the world. It would be extremely time-consuming to relate seriously and in detail the size, width, length of this church, famous world-wide, the sequence of its many wonderful marble columns, the great number, order and distinctiveness of its paintings, its amazing pavement made out of marble incrustations, its lead-covered roof. But let us leave aside such worldly aspects and let us speak only of the spiritual things which are in that outmost holy church.¹

With such words the Italian fourteenth-century pilgrim Antonio de' Reboldi, a member of the Dominican order, declared his astonishment at the unparalleled beauty of the Bethlehem church, perhaps more efficaciously than any visitor before or since: the old building was really worth praising, because of its many luxurious

1 Antonio de' Reboldi (1326), ed. Röhrich 1890, p. 160.



5 | The spot of Christ's birthplace within the eastern niche of the Nativity cave, Nativity church, Bethlehem

ornaments, which made it so different from most of the Palestinian *loca sancta*, which, in Antonio's times, were frequently in a ruinous or unappealing state. And nevertheless, to the disappointment of modern art historians, he refused to give more detail: the magnificent church space and its lavish ornaments were to be regarded as *temporalia*, secular things bearing witness to human engagement in glorifying God, and so, though outstandingly sumptuous, they should not be given excessive emphasis lest readers misunderstand the upper basilica as the real goal of pilgrimage.

What really mattered was the experience of the site-specific sanctity which was located not in the church, but in the hollow and tiny underground cave which was identified as the very site of Christ's birth, the first manifestation of the Incarnated Son of God's passage on earth, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew (2, 1–11) and Luke (1, 21). In Antonio's times as in ours, pilgrims thronged into the church before being allowed to enter the grotto through a small flight of steps: once inside, they recognized their



6 | The Nativity cave looking east, Nativity church, Bethlehem

primary object of worship in a hole on the marble-reveted ground of a tiny niche on the eastern wall, which was identified as the very spot where Jesus had come to life and where his body had first touched the ground [FIGS 5–6]. Later on, they turned their eyes to another cultic focus of no less importance, the site of the manger located in the slightly lower south cave [FIGS 7–8].

Even today, pilgrims to the Holy Land quickly become accustomed to devotional practices that are probably otherwise alien to most of them: they bow and kiss portions of marble floors and put their heads and hands into holes in the ground because their Palestinian cult-objects, unlike the relics or miraculous images that are usually venerated in the Christian shrines of other parts of the world, are literally grafted onto the soil. They can be considered as slight or even dot-like portions of earthly surface that came to be regarded as especially worthy of worship on account of their memorial associations with some Gospel events: in this respect, they have often been hinted at as exemplary cases of “memorial sites”



7 | The Chapel of the Holy Manger, Nativity church, Bethlehem



8 | The spot of the Holy Manger, Nativity church, Bethlehem

or *mnemotopoi*.² Pilgrims visiting the Bethlehem cave were and still are encouraged to remember and mentally evoke the story of Jesus' birth: through the centuries, visitors have often made use of specific meditation techniques which enabled them to efficaciously visualize the Christmas story. One such technique was especially widespread in the West during the Late Middle Ages and came to be known as "locative memory" (*memoria locale*), a pious exercise of imagination the basic aim of which was to figure out the scenes in their authentic spatial setting.³

Glancing at a holy site enabled viewers to be reminded of the sacred event that took place in that very spot and to reenact it in their personal experience: probably the most eagerly desired outcome of a visit to the Bethlehem cave was, for most believers, to more or less consciously feel the sensation of being physically present in the very moment of Christ's descent into the world, and to become an eye-witness to his Incarnation. This feeling, which implied the overcoming of the temporal divide vis-à-vis sacred history, lay at the core of the pilgrims' experience of the Palestinian *loca sancta* from early times, even if it assumed different inflections depending on each individual's mindset, the cultural and confessional background of each visitor, and the multifarious developments undergone by devotional customs and sensibilities in the course of time. Nonetheless, there are probably also other factors that have to be taken into account. It can be guessed, for example, if and to what extent kissing or touching the ground can be regarded as only instrumental to the mental evocation of the Nativity story. Such acts indicate a more direct and body-driven religious behavior: more or less consciously, they aim at appropriating some site-specific qualities of the holy place, which are

2 On this and associated notions, cf. Halbwachs 1941 [2008]; Assman 1992; Assman 1999, pp. 298–342.

3 Bacci 2014a.

deemed to be advantageous on either spiritual or even material grounds. In some way the site is perceived not just as the empty setting of a crucial event of sacred history; rather it retains at least some of the divine energy that was manifested at the very moment when the ground was first touched by the newborn Jesus' body and the cave was filled with God's cloud of glory (as recorded in the probably mid-second century *Protoevangelium of James*).⁴ The principle that portions of earthly surface hallowed by contact with the Incarnated Christ may be viewed as surrogates for his bodily presence lingered in Christian thought for many centuries and eventually invested the *loca sancta* with a sort of immanent supernatural agency, notwithstanding the formal opposition of many ecclesiastical authors, who, in accordance with Saint Paul's doctrine, denied the possibility of attributing to God a terrestrial abode and of circumscribing divine omnipotence within portions of ground and material objects.⁵

THE BIRTH OF JESUS' BIRTHPLACE

A comprehensive history of the shifting perceptions of the site-specific sanctity attributed to the Palestinian holy places has still to be written. Scholars hotly debate whether Christian pilgrimage sites first emerged before or after Constantine, if they preceded or followed the practice of erecting shrines around the burial sites of martyrs and other holy people, and on what grounds some places came to be viewed as extraordinarily worthy of public and individual worship.⁶ In many respects, Bethlehem lies at the core of this debate, given that a number of early sources prevent us from thoroughly dismissing the possibility that the cultic phenomenon associated with it may date back already to the second century CE.⁷ In that period, between 155 and 161 AD, Justin Martyr wrote down his *Dialogue with Tryphon the Jew*, which, according

to some authors, may have been conceived before the rebellion of Bar Kochba in 133–135 and the expulsion of Jews from the whole area of Jerusalem (Hadrian's *Aelia Capitolina*). To corroborate his argument about the authenticity of Jesus' role as the Messiah announced by the Scriptures, Justin laid emphasis on his birth in Bethlehem of Judaea, the place where David was anointed King of Israel by the hands of the Prophet Samuel (1 Sam 16, 1–18), and stated that, when Joseph could not find any free lodging in the village, he and Mary moved to a nearby cave, where the Child was born.⁸

This is the very first mention of a grotto that has come down to us. The Gospel narratives are notoriously sparse in topographic details. They insist that Jesus was not born in Nazareth and that the Holy Family made a long journey to the small village of Judaea, which was praised in the Old Testament prophecies as the future birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5, 2: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out

4 *Protoevangelium of James*, (19, 2), ed. Amann 1910, p. 252.

5 See especially Bitton-Ashkelony 2005, pp. 48–62.

6 Among the most relevant studies from different perspectives, cf. Turner 1979; Hunt 1982, pp. 83–106; Maraval 2011 [1985]; Smith 1987, pp. 78–83; MacCormack 1990; Markus 1990, pp. 139–156; Walker 1990; Wilken 1992; Taylor 1993; Markus 1994; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005; Sotinel 2005; Yasin 2009; Canetti 2012, pp. 51–113. The discussion is sometimes hampered by the use of a rather ambiguous terminology. Throughout this book, I make use of the term "holy site", hinting at a site-specific and immediate form of experiencing the divine, as distinguished from "sacred space", interpreted as synonym for a congregational context, where the divine sphere is evoked and mediated by means of some human, i.e. ritual activity: cf. Bacci 2014b, with more extensive bibliography. Eusebius of Caesarea is the first Christian author to introduce the notion of "holy site" (τόπος ἅγιος) as distinguished from sacred space: cf. Maraval 2002, p. 67. The different ways in which the divine sphere is associated with material objects is a big issue in the present-day scholarly debate within and across several disciplines, including anthropology, history of religions, and art history: cf. in particular, for the theoretic frame applied to medieval studies, Bynum 2011, who does not really comment, however, on the materiality of holy sites and their controversial relationship with ritual spaces.

7 For a discussion of early sources on the Nativity site, cf. especially Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 1–18; Klameth 1923, I, pp. 38–87; Bagatti 1952, pp. 114–117; Kopp 1959, pp. 10–55; Kroll 1978, pp. 41–66; Keel/Kühler 1982, pp. 594–650; Cazelles 1989; Chrupcała 2009, pp. 33–51, 105–120, 133–149; Kubis 2011–2013.

8 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Tryphon*, LXXVIII, 5–6, ed. Bobichon 2003, I, pp. 398–400.

of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times”). The reason for this displacement was, according to Luke (2, 1–5), a Roman census that obliged all residents to register in their ancestral town: Joseph, as a member of the house of David, was therefore forced to move to the King of Israel’s place of origin. Emphasis on Christ’s birth in Bethlehem provided readers with a manifest answer to the doubts expressed by some of Jesus’ Jerusalemite listeners: “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” (John 7, 41–42). Given that all ancient authors were perfectly aware of this connection, there is no need to assume that early Christians may have located Jesus’ birthplace in the homonymous Bethlehem of Galilee, as proposed by the Israeli archaeologist Aviram Oshri.⁹

More problematic is defining the specific location of Jesus’ birth within Bethlehem of Judaea. Whereas Matthew (2, 11) speaks of a “house” in which the Holy Family lodged, Luke (2, 7) indicates that, when Jesus was born, Mary “wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them”. The passage indicated in this way that the Lord had come to life in a stable, given that the Greek word for manger (φάτνη) was often used as a synecdoche for a corral. This association was later enhanced by those apocryphal texts which, starting from the seventh or eighth century *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, explicitly mentioned the presence of an ox and a donkey, bearing witness, as already suggested in a number of earlier sources, to the messianic prophecies of Isaiah (1, 3: “The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner’s manger”) and Habakkuk (3, 2 Sept.: “you will manifest yourself between two animals”).¹⁰ That a stable may have been located in a cave is hardly surprising, given that this practice has been commonplace in Palestine for many centuries and is so today,¹¹ and it is normally

assumed that Justin Martyr, a native of Neapolis (present-day Nablus), may have been well acquainted with such usages. On the other hand, the mention of the cave by the anonymous author of the *Protoevangelium of James*, who reveals a rather impressive ignorance of both Palestinian geography and Jewish customs, indicates that he must have picked up traditions then already widespread.

Does this imply that, at this early stage, a cult-phenomenon associated with a cave in or near the village of Bethlehem was already flourishing? Scholars are basically divided in two parties, who debate whether the material site worked as a source of inspiration for the speculations of theologians or, on the contrary, if textual emphasis on the grotto finally led to the shaping of a site worshipped as the Nativity cave. Admittedly, the setting of the scene in a cave provided apologists of the Christian faith with an efficacious rhetorical argument: they were enabled to stress that the Son of God had chosen to manifest himself in a dark, restricted, and dirty place which could easily be contrasted to the basic divine attributes of extreme brightness, immensity, and uncircumscribability, and could therefore be taken as a powerful symbol of matter, decay, and sin.¹² Yet the cave could also be invested with a definitely positive meaning: Justin interpreted it as yet another hint at the fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy, that of Isaiah (33, 16) according to the Greek Septuagint version (“This one will live in the high cave of strong rock; bread will be given to him, and his water will be assured”), where the mention of bread could also be usefully associated with the Jewish meaning of the town name (*beit-lehem*, “house of bread”), that revealed, in Christian exegesis, a most obvious Eucharistic association. It was also

9 Oshri 2005; Oshri 2008.

10 *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (14, 1), ed. Tischendorf 1876, p. 80. Cf. Chrupcala 2009, p. 133–142.

11 Dalman 1939, pp. 276–287.

12 Jerome, *Epistulae*, 46:11, ed. Hilberg 1996, I, p. 341.

sometimes assumed that the setting within a cave may have been reminiscent of the underground births attributed to some Pagan gods (especially Zeus) and the use of similar locations in Mithraic rituals,¹³ but the similarities are probably to be traced back to the maternal symbolism attributed to grottoes in different religious traditions and largely exploited in Christian literature, where the cave often stands for the blessed womb of the Virgin Mother.¹⁴ Most importantly, the underground location of the Son of God's first theophany on earth enabled Christian theologians to exploit the old literary *topos* of the tiny and dark cave as a metaphor of human ignorance of divine mysteries, in order to underscore that, with Christ's Incarnation, the darkness of sin had been dispersed and mankind's humble dwelling place had been illuminated by the Sun of Glory.¹⁵

On the other hand, other scholars supposed that Justin ruminated on an already existing cave and made efforts to invest it with allegorical and moral meanings. This hypothesis admits the possibility that the memory of Christ's true birthplace may have been almost uninterruptedly cultivated by local Jewish-Christian groups.¹⁶ Lack of further evidence prevents resolution of this conundrum: nonetheless, the testimony of the church father Origen, writing around 247, states clearly enough that by his time a cult-phenomenon centered around a grotto was well rooted and known in Bethlehem. In his refutation of the pagan philosopher Celsus' allegations against Christianity, Origen, who lived in those years in Caesarea Maritima and had presumably a good knowledge of Palestinian holy sites, laid emphasis on the importance of the Nativity cave as material witness to the identity of Jesus as the Messiah announced by the Old Testament prophets:

If anyone wishes to have further proof to be convinced that Jesus was born in Bethlehem besides the prophecy of Micah and the story recorded in the Gospels by Jesus' disciples, it can

be remarked that, in accordance with the story in the Gospel about his birth, a cave is shown in Bethlehem where he was born and the manger in the cave where he was wrapped in swaddling clothes. What is demonstrated there, namely that the Jesus who is worshipped and admired by Christians was born right in that cave, is well known in those parts even among people alien to the faith.¹⁷

Origen's passage seems to state in rather unequivocal terms that, in the third century, a form of memorialization of the Nativity event was already developed and connected with a material site that was offered for the inspection of pious believers. This implies that the cave was associated with some forms of cultic practice, or with pilgrimage at its embryonic stage. The hint at the presence of a manger suggests that worship was developed enough to provide the cave with a basic *mise-en-scène* that laid emphasis on its most distinctive element, the *φάτνη* mentioned in Luke's narrative. By glancing at it, believers could literally follow in the steps of the Bethlehem shepherds, who could recognize the Lord by means of the visual sign announced by the angel: namely the sight of a baby laying in a manger (Lk 2, 8–16).

Such a matter of fact can hardly be underestimated or neglected and indeed it constitutes the most reliable piece of evidence about the possibility that the memorial sites of the Gospels may have already emerged in pre-Constantinian times, even if attempts have been made at working out some counterarguments. Oddly enough, a passage by Jerome, writing at the end of the fourth

¹³ See, lately, Versteegen 2015, pp. 164–165.

¹⁴ On these aspects, see especially della Dora 2016, p. 182–185.

¹⁵ Testa 1963–1964.

¹⁶ Testa 1963–1964, pp. 71–78; Mancini 1968, pp. 137–138; Bagatti 1971b, pp. 133–134; Kroll 1978, pp. 47–49.

¹⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.51, ed. Fiedrowicz/Barthold 2011, I, p. 300. I am providing here a translation where *ὡς*, *contra* Chadwick 1953, pp. 47–48, is interpreted as a predicative conjunction, depending from τὸ δεῖκνύμενον, as it is in Barthold's German translation.

century, in which the Church Father reports that, during the rule of Emperor Hadrian, the Bethlehem cave had been turned into a site of pagan worship associated with the god Adonis/Tammuz and with a holy grove,¹⁸ is given much credit by the British historian Joan Taylor: she associates this reference with Origen's mention of local non-Christians being aware of Jesus' birthplace and with Cyril of Jerusalem's description of the site as a "sylvan place".¹⁹ She goes so far as to suggest that the identification of the Bethlehem grotto as Jesus' birthplace may have been encouraged by the pagan inhabitants of the area, who should have located there the place where their own deity was born, even if there is no clear evidence of this: Jerome himself makes clear that worship consisted rather in ritual lamentations for Adonis' death.²⁰

This argumentation is admittedly highly conjectural. Most remarkably, it fails to explain why a cave associated with mysteric cults should have displayed a manger as its most prominent cultic focus. Moreover, it seems to dismiss too quickly the possibility that the allusion to Adonis may have been instrumental in creating a rhetorical parallelism with the vicissitudes of the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, upon which Hadrian was said to have erected a temple in honor of Adonis' lover, Aphrodite.²¹ Whereas Origen writes that the site was attractive even for non-Christians, Jerome seems to imply that the place was thoroughly desecrated as an act of retaliation, which some scholars assume to be unlikely, given that Bethlehem had played no significant role in the rebellion of Bar Kochba (133–135). Rather than as an anti-Jewish measure, the development of a pagan tradition around the site should be seen, according to some interpreters, as an outcome of anti-Christian persecutions, most likely those by Decius in 250–251.²² Be this as it may, it is safer to assume that the grotto was a basically Christian cult-site that happened to be frequented and revered by non-Christians too. The existence of trans-religious holy sites

in Palestine since early times is relatively well-documented: the most important such site being that of the oak of Mambre, which is known to have been a cult-object for Jews, Samaritans, Pagans, Christians and later on also Muslims.²³

Scholars also point out some divergences in early sources as to the precise location of Christ's birth. Whereas Origen generically hints at the cave being located in the village, Justin Martyr locates it in its vicinity, and this has been sometimes regarded as evidence of a widespread unawareness of the exact spot where Jesus was born. A passage in the probably fourth-century apocryphal Gospel known in Latin as *Joseph the Carpenter*, stating that the Lord's birthplace was close to Rachel's Tomb, so halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, has been quoted as further evidence of the existence of different traditions concerning the true site of the Nativity. Yet it is more probable that this latter text misinterprets the episode, told in the *Protoevangelium of James*, of Mary's rest after she and Joseph had passed the third milestone along the road to the town of David. This episode was monumentally glorified in the fifth century with the erection of a sumptuous octagonal building known as *Kathisma*, the "seat" of Mary.²⁴

Incidentally, exactly what early authors meant when hinting at Bethlehem's topography in Late Antiquity can hardly be guessed, given that no extensive archaeological investigation of the village has ever been made. It must be stressed, anyway, that

18 Jerome, *Epistolae*, 58: 3, ed. Hilberg 1996, I, pp. 531–532.

19 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 12:20, ed. Migne 1856–1866, xxxiii, col. 685.

20 Taylor 1993, pp. 96–112.

21 Welten 1983.

22 Keel/Küchler 1982, pp. 622–623.

23 Taylor 1993, pp. 86–95; Hepper/Gibson 1994; Kofsky 1998; Fowden 2002, pp. 125–129; Limor 2007, pp. 221–222; Arnold 2013, pp. 42–44; Fowden 2015, pp. 181–182.

24 Jugie 1923, pp. 131–144; Jugie 1943; Keel/Küchler 1982, pp. 600–601; Bagatti 1983, pp. 34–37; Taylor 1993, p. 338; Mimouni 2011, pp. 353–354; Avner 2011, pp. 17–19; Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 117–140.

the identification of the original cave with the present one is more convincing than any other hypothesis. The site is on a rocky hill dotted with caves on the northern slope of the southernmost edge of the ridge upon which Bethlehem is built. An archaeological survey made in the 1960s indicated that the earliest known settlement in the area dated from the Bronze Age and, unlike the modern village, was located on the sloping hill to the east of the Nativity cave.²⁵ It is disputed whether, in Jesus' times, the built-up area was still in the same location or on a hill to the west of the present-day Manger Square, where the ground formed a depression crossed through by the aqueduct bringing water from the Pools of Solomon (to the south of Bethlehem) to the Jerusalem Temple Mount. The second hypothesis seems to be favored in scholarship: in both cases, the site of the grotto corresponded to a "liminal" location at the border between anthropized and open spaces, which may explain why it came to be described as both inside and nearby the ancient hamlet. Possibly, it also played a role in enhancing the aura of holiness attributed to the site and its perception as a threshold to the supernatural dimension.

THE FIRST *MISE-EN-SCÈNE* OF THE
HOLY CAVE (CA. 330 – END OF THE SIXTH CENTURY)

There are sufficient grounds to assume that a cult-phenomenon associated with a cave already existed in Bethlehem before Emperor Constantine, at the solicitation of his mother Helena, decided to promote worship for the most important cult-sites in and close to Jerusalem by means of a sophisticated architectural and town planning program. Most information about this initiative comes from the writings of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea Maritima and leading figure of the Palestinian church, who most probably played a key-role in the shaping of the new topography

of Holy Land pilgrimage. The newly erected sumptuous churches, marking the sites associated with the most important moments of Christ's passage on earth, gave shape to a new Christian landscape of the holy city and its outskirts, which was transformed into a network of holy places working as a topographic transcription of the Gospel narratives. Pilgrims were now invited to inspect with their own eyes the material traces of sacred history according to the chronological sequence described in the holy scriptures: they could celebrate the Son of God's coming to life in Bethlehem, his death before the Rock of Golgotha and his resurrection in the *Anastasis* rotunda, before moving to the Mount of Olives to commemorate his Ascension to heaven, and visiting the cave of the Lord's prayer below the Eleona church.²⁶ Eusebius interpreted such sites as proofs of the truth of Scriptures and intentionally underscored that the three major events of the Gospels had taken place within grottoes, which he described as *μυστικοὶ ἄντροι* ("mystic caves"), where the adjective "mystic" was used basically as synonymous with "holy", even if it nevertheless retained its etymological meaning as "secret" or "mysterious".²⁷

The building campaign in Bethlehem took place between 327/328 (date of Helena's trip to the Holy Land) and 333, when a Latin pilgrim, the so-called Bordeaux anonymous, reports that a church had by then been erected above the cave.²⁸ The official consecration rite, however, took place on 31 May 339.²⁹ Eusebius was perfectly aware that the villagers had the habit of showing

25 Berman/Gutman 1970; Kroll 1978, p. 47.

26 On Constantine's and Helena's building and town planning initiatives see now Angelova 2015, pp. 111–146, sp. pp. 144–146 on the Holy Land monuments; cf. also Versteegen 2013; Versteegen 2015.

27 Walker 1990, pp. 171–198.

28 Bordeaux anonymous, ed. Geyer et al. 1965, p. 20.

29 As can be reconstructed on liturgical grounds, given that the dedication of the church was celebrated on May 31 and on the seventh Thursday after Easter. Cf. Garitte 1958, pp. 430–431; Milik 1960, p. 572.

the cave to visitors longing to see the place where “the Virgin bore and lay with the child”.³⁰ The pious sovereigns had therefore most commendably engaged in providing the site with a more suitable and efficacious setting. They acknowledged specifically that the grotto was the scene of the Son of God’s first appearance on earth and that it bore witness to the truth of His incarnation. By honoring the place, they behaved not unlike ordinary people going on pilgrimage to glance at the memorial sites of Christ’s life: their basic aim was to manifest their pious memory, and conscious involvement, in the holy event that had taken place in those very spots. The wording used in the *Life of Constantine* is highly significant in this respect: Empress Helena, writes Eusebius, did not simply decorate a cave, she “beautified the Godbearer’s pregnancy with wonderful monuments”.³¹ That a material, geographically determined entity may be used as a metonymical surrogate for a temporal category indicates that, by Helena’s and Eusebius’ times, the cave had come to be regarded as a material concretization of the historical event of Jesus’ birth. The “memory” (μνήμη), being the object of public homage, was something much more concrete than the modern sense of the word allows us to think.

By will of the Empress, the dark and tiny grotto was transformed into a place glittering with light and ornaments of every kind. The manger, described in the Gospel as the distinctive mark of the holy event, worked as the most important cultic focus, so that the cave came to be known simply as “the holy site of the manger”.³² Jerome, who settled in the vicinity of the holy site in 388 and died there in 420, laid emphasis on the devotional efficaciousness of the cave, and more specifically, of the crib. The sight of the place was described as capable of arousing a vision of the sacred events narrated in the Gospel of Luke. In his *Epitaph of Paula*, he records the Roman lady’s ecstatic experience during her visit to the holy cave in the following way:

From there she entered the cave of the Savior and beheld the virgin’s sacred inn and the stall where the ox knew its owner and the donkey its master’s crib... I heard her swear that she could see, with the eyes of faith, the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes crying in the crib; the Magi worshipping him as God; the star shining down on high; the virgin mother; the attentive foster-father, the shepherds coming by night both to see the Word which had come to pass..., the slaughtered infants; Herod in his rage; and Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt. Shedding tears mixed with joy, she said: “Hail, Bethlehem, house of bread, where the Bread that comes down from heaven was born... I, a wretched sinner, have been considered worthy both to kiss the crib in which the baby Lord cried and to pray in the cave in which the virgin in labor gave birth to the infant God. This is my place of respite because it is the native land of my Lord. I will dwell here because the Savior chose it.”³³

The Latin father viewed the site, which was elected by the Son of God as his first earthly residence, as the most holy in Palestine.³⁴ Its merits were evident to him: the site’s materiality, and especially its tiny dimensions, bore clear witness to the Omnipotent’s extreme act of self-humiliation, that of becoming a man in an extremely humble and poor place, a “small hole in the ground” instead of a luxurious palace.³⁵ The ornaments added by Helena were certainly praiseworthy as manifestations of piety, yet Jerome also found they might divert beholders from contemplation. He lamented specifically that the precious silver revetment embellishing the manger

30 Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* 7.2.15, ed. Heikel 1913, p. 331; cf. also 3.2.47, *Ibidem*, p. 103.

31 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini*, 3.43.1, ed. Winkelman 1975, pp. 101–102; English translation by Cameron and Hall 1999, pp. 137–138.

32 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 10.19, ed. Migne 1856–1866, xxxiii, col. 749.

33 Jerome, *Epistolae*, 108:10, ed. Hilberg 1996, II, pp. 316–317. I have used the English translation by Cain 2013, p. 55; cf. also p. 18.

34 On the primacy of Bethlehem in Jerome’s thought, cf. Limor 2001; Cain 2013, pp. 14–20.

35 Jerome, *Epistolae*, 46:11, ed. Hilberg 1996, I, p. 341.

prevented him from properly meditating on the sacred event: for this purpose, the original crib, made of clay, would have been much more suitable.³⁶ Other visitors, by contrast, were astonished at seeing how efficaciously that humble place was made beautiful by its perpetual lighting and its silver and golden décor: even if sunshine could never penetrate its walls, it could rightly be described as a “shining grotto”, replicating the epiphany of light that, according to the *Protoevangelium of James*, had taken place there after Jesus’ birth.³⁷ Some textual hints indicate that the holy spots were enclosed within a grille.³⁸

Prior to Constantine’s building campaign, the cave was just an element of the natural landscape that was invested with memorial qualities. There is no evidence as to a previous phase of architectural monumentalization: some remnants of a circular structure found in the 1930s in the church choir were interpreted by the French scholar Mamert Vionnet as belonging to the temple of Adonis mentioned by Origen, but it is beyond doubt that they date rather from post-Constantinian times, as we will see below.³⁹ Moreover, both Origen and Cyril of Jerusalem lay emphasis on the location of the cave in a grove, without any mention of built structures. The visitor’s experience of Bethlehem’s site-specific sanctity was therefore significantly altered by the initiative promoted by the imperial court. First of all, the cave no longer looked like a natural grotto, but rather like a precious shrine shining with light and precious materials: the paradox of the Son of God’s first manifestation in a humble, miserable place was visualized by the decoration of that place with an excess of lamps and luxury revetments. Second, access to the site had become less easy, as visitors had to go through a huge complex of buildings before they could approach the holy site. The *locus sanctus*, which implied a basically direct, immediate, and personal approach to the divine sphere, was most distinctively associated with, and to some extent

subordinated to, a wide congregational church, the elaborate spatial structure of which was instrumental, on the contrary, in laying emphasis on the mediating role of the liturgy and the trans-individual, collective participation of the Christian *ecclesia* in her ritual dialogue with God.

THE CHURCH OF CONSTANTINE AND HELENA

Our knowledge of the Constantinian structures largely relies on the interpretation of some illuminating, yet partial data collected during the excavations and soundings made by the British administration of Palestine below the church courtyard in 1932 and inside the basilica in 1934: it can only be hoped that the planned continuation of the conservation works may add further evidence to this still unclear early phase of the architectural works.⁴⁰ What we can infer from the results of the archaeological investigations is, first of all, that the ground of the rocky hill was evened out and made ready for an ambitious architectural undertaking: this also implied that the trees, such a distinctive feature of the place, were felled. The new buildings were meant to equal the magnificence of those erected in Jerusalem. Not unlike the *Martyrium* and the Eleona churches, the basilica was preceded by a wide atrium with covered colonnades, paved partly with a stone

36 Jerome, *Homilia de nativitate Domini*, ed. Morin 1958, pp. 524–525.

37 Pseudo-Eucherius, *De situ Hierusolimae*, ed. Fraipont 1965, pp. 238–239; Piacenza anonymous, ed. Geyer 1965, p. 143.

38 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 116.

39 Vionnet 1938.

40 Hamilton 1934; Baumstark 1934; Harvey 1935, pp. 17–30; Harvey 1936; Harvey/Harvey 1937; Richmond 1936; Richmond 1938; Rücker 1938–1939; Vincent 1935; Vincent 1936; Vincent 1937; Vincent 1948. Prior to the excavations, scholars tended to consider the present building as dating from Constantine’s times: de Vogüé 1860, pp. 46–64; Lethaby 1910; Weigand 1911; Weigand 1915; Weigand 1923. The first to hypothesize two distinct, Constantinian and Justinianic, building phases were Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 19–106. Cf. also Bacci 2015, pp. 50–54, for historiography on Bethlehem.

floor and partly with a mosaic pavement, on a location that corresponds approximately to that of the present-day church courtyard.⁴¹ Access to the atrium was provided by a vestibule or porch, located on the site of the present-day Manger Square. The recent, still unpublished discovery of a cistern, two rectangular rooms, and a fourth- or fifth-century mosaic floor with floral and geometric motifs below the Palestine Peace Centre to the north-west of the basilica may indicate that the complex included also side-annexes, possibly used as residential structures or hospices for pilgrims.⁴² In this same period, the Church ceased to be located outside the village: it was enclosed within the walls erected by Constantine himself, and renovated by Justinian in the sixth century.⁴³

The church itself consisted of an almost square, five-aisled nave roofed with tiles.⁴⁴ The eastern end of the building, which was accessible via a flight of steps from the central nave, was erected directly above the cave, with the evident aim of establishing a vertical correspondence between the holy site and the space reserved for the performance of the liturgy. The excavations brought to light remnants of a structure of which the original shape and function have been, and to some extent are still, a matter of debate. From the remnants it is clear that the structure consisted of an octagonal building with a raised platform of a similarly octagonal shape in the center. The inner octagon was likely meant as a support for the altar, even if no clear evidence about the latter's exact location has been found: it could have been located either on the rear of the platform, or close to the steps leading up to it in the nave. Some authors went so far as to infer from this that the Constantinian building had originally no liturgical function,⁴⁵ but this is contradicted by a passage of Jerome's letter to the deacon Sabinianus, where the manger itself is described as an altar and mention is made of hymns and psalmodies being sung in the choir.⁴⁶

The pavement of the raised platform was marked with a circular wall of masonry, with an inner diameter of about 3.85 m and an outer circumference, in its eastern section, that corresponded roughly with the chord of the small apse of the Nativity in the underground cave |PLAN II|. ⁴⁷ A widely accepted hypothesis is that this may have originally been a sort of monumental *oculus* or circular opening that was pierced into the roof of the cave, in order to enable pilgrims to gaze down at the site of Jesus' birth and the manger. The wide dimensions of this structure clashed with the narrowness of the staircase leading down to the site of Jesus' birth and blocked up at an unknown date, which was located at the eastern end of the central nave below a raised structure connected with the octagon: this may indicate that the entrance was used only sporadically or was reserved only for some privileged visitors.⁴⁸ Its being narrow, in any case, supports what the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza writes about it in 570, namely that the stairway was "extremely narrow".⁴⁹

If this archaeological reconstruction holds true, we can speculate that the new setting was intended to prevent or discourage ordinary visitors from directly accessing the holy grotto and therefore

41 Hamilton 1934. A fragment of mosaic with a simple ornamental pattern on a white background was found in 1934 in the so-called guard-room to the north of the present-day narthex: it is assumed that it originally embellished the north-eastern corner of the open-air part of the atrium. Cf. Richmond 1936, p. 80 and pl. 48; Richmond 1938, p. 63; Hamilton 1947, p. 50.

42 *Birthplace of Jesus* 2011, pp. 92–93. From a technical and stylistic viewpoint, this mosaic is close to the floor fragments discovered in the side-aisles of the basilica and in the guard-room.

43 Bagatti 1952, pp. 231–232, 247–265; Benoit 1975; Bagatti 1983, pp. 39–41; Weill-Rochant 1997, pp. 10–14.

44 Roof tiles belonging to the original building were discovered in the north transept: Harvey 1936, p. 31.

45 Crowfoot 1941, p. 28; Mango 1974, pp. 42–44; Ovadia 1970, pp. 33–34.

46 Jerome, *Epistulae*, 147:5, ed. Hilberg 1996, III, p. 320.

47 Harvey 1935, pp. 25–30 and pls 102–116; Richmond 1936, pp. 75–76; Richmond 1938, p. 65; Vincent 1936, pp. 560–565.

48 Harvey 1935, p. 18; Hamilton 1947, p. 14; Bagatti 1952, p. 47.

49 Piacenza anonymous, ed. Geyer 1965, p. 143: "*Os vero speluncae ad ingrediendum angustum omnino.*"

to transform their experience into a basically visual approach to the divine sphere materialized in the *locus sanctus*. The opening in the sanctuary platform played consequently a role similar to that attributed in martyrial churches to the so-called *fenestella confessionis*, a small window that enabled pilgrims to look at, but prevented them from touching, a saint's tomb.⁵⁰ The presence of vertical channels at regular intervals around the outer face of the circle suggested that a monumental ciborium stood above it, but it cannot be ruled out that they were simply meant to hold the supports for an iron or bronze fencing.⁵¹ It has also been assumed that, on the model of the Jerusalem Anastasis, an analogous, wide *oculus*, was located at the center of the vaulting of the octagon: this may imply that, around midday when the sun reached the zenith, the manger and Nativity site could be lit with sunshine.⁵² The vertical axis shaped by the light penetrating the building through its two *oculi* would have worked as metaphoric indicator of both the Son of God's descent from Heaven and the standing point of the star which had revealed Jesus' birthplace to the wise men from the East.⁵³

The spatial solution worked out by Constantine's architects is admittedly puzzling. To some extent, it seems to be reminiscent of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, where a large, five-aisled basilica was combined with a central-planned building, the Anastasis, but the comparison cannot go further: the great congregational church of the so-called Martyrium was in fact a thoroughly independent building, separated from the Rotunda housing the Tomb of Christ by an open atrium, on one of the corners of which stood the rock of Golgotha. In other terms, the space reserved for ritual activities was kept quite distinct from the holy sites that were the object of the pilgrims' worship: they stood close to one another, but their different functions were immediately recognizable.⁵⁴ The architects of the Eleona church opted for a spatial solution that was in many respects closer to the one used in Bethlehem. The main cultic focus

was, as in the site of the Nativity, an underground cave, which was transformed into a sort of crypt located immediately below the presbytery of the five-aisled basilica. Nonetheless, no special efforts were made to provide the eastern end of the building, which consisted of an ordinary apse, with a distinctive form: the association of the congregational space with a holy site was made evident not by an extraordinary *mise-en-scène*, but rather by their being juxtaposed along a vertical, rather than horizontal axis.⁵⁵

Bethlehem seems to position itself somewhere between these two different ways of staging the interrelationship of sites deemed to be holy and spaces meant for the performance of the mass. A mausoleum-like, central-planned shape was given in this case to the altar-space itself and the sanctuary platform was a structural device instrumental to the pilgrims' worship of the holy cave. It must be stressed that this setting is unparalleled even in martyrial churches, where saints' tombs are generally located either in a separate building, connected more or less directly to the congregational space, or directly below the latter, an exception to this rule possibly being those large funerary basilicas which enabled believers to be buried

50 Grabar 1946, I, pp. 245–246, who also comments on the architectural similarities with martyrial churches. Ovadia 1970, pp. 33–34, lays emphasis on the resemblance to the Anastasis Rotunda.

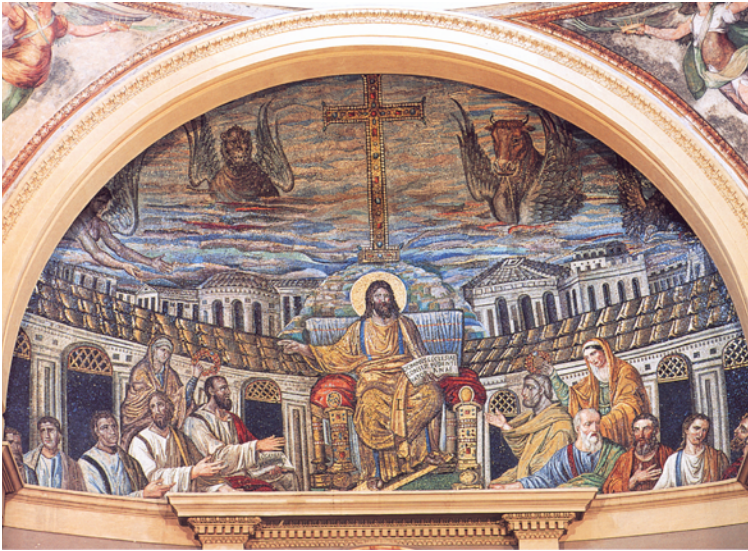
51 As originally suggested by Harvey 1935, p. 20, and Harvey 1936, p. 29. The presence of a ciborium was proposed by Vincent 1936, p. 562.

52 Vincent 1936, p. 572; Spuler 1973, p. 127; Krautheimer 1986, pp. 266–267; Piazza 2015, pp. 53–57; Verstegen 2015, p. 156.

53 Pullan 2000.

54 Among the most relevant studies and surveys on the architectural history of the Holy Sepulchre, cf. Heisenberg 1908; Vincent and Abel 1912–1926, II, pp. 89–300; Dyggve 1941; Coüasnon 1974; Corbo 1982; Ousterhout 1990; Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 6–72; Kleinbauer 1998; Kalokyris 1999; Krüger 2000, pp. 39–82; Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 43–77.

55 Vincent 1911; Vincent/Abel 1912–1926, II, pp. 337–360, 374–412; Vincent 1920; Vincent 1957. The very location of Christ's Ascension, known as *Imboman*, was shifted to the top of the Mount of Olives by the late fourth century. Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 91–93, assumes that the Eleona church may have been more directly connected with some structure built on the site of Christ's Ascension since the very beginnings. Cf. also Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 72–88, 117–124; Brenk 2005, p. 129; Losito 2014, pp. 32–66.



9 | Apse mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome, 5th century

close to the sepulchers of martyrs.⁵⁶ It is hardly surprising that the unparalleled architectural plan of Constantine's church also aroused some criticism: it has been remarked that the presence of a large opening should have left some traces in the vaulting of the grotto, and it has been assumed that the so-called *oculus* may have rather been meant to encircle and secure a large marble plaque used as support for the main altar. Accordingly, the latter stood within a monumental ciborium in the very middle of the octagon, which functioned therefore as a sort of polygonal apse. If this were indeed the case, one should imagine that direct access to the cave was privileged over its contemplation from the outside: this may mean, perhaps, that a more comfortable entrance existed, perhaps on the north side.⁵⁷

Lack of further information prevents us from getting a clearer picture. Texts are reticent about details of the architectural structure. Visual sources, in their turn, are highly controversial. The most intriguing evidence is provided by the early fifth-century

apse mosaic in the church of Santa Pudenziana in Rome (FIG. 9): the town displayed in the background on the right half of the composition was often interpreted as a heavenly double of Bethlehem, according to an iconographic formula, invested with apocalyptic meanings, which is commonplace in Early Christian and medieval church decoration in Rome. An arcaded building with conical roof and a square opening on its top was sometimes considered to generically evoke the material features of the eastern end of the Nativity church, but it cannot be ruled out that it was just a free combination of forms associated with classical imperial architecture whose purpose was to suggest the unparalleled sumptuousness of the otherworldly townscape.⁵⁸ In any case, a not too dissimilar structure occurs also in the mosaic decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore (*post* 431), where the town is represented encircled within a tall wall: the building to be seen on the far left, which looks much like a central-planned, pyramid-like church, can be identified with the basilica of the Nativity.⁵⁹ Furthermore, indirect evidence of the octagon's appearance may be provided by the recently excavated remains of the monumental octagonal structure erected in the fifth century to frame the *Kathisma* mentioned above: it is assumed that the latter may have been intentionally used as model for the former, in such a way as to establish also a visual parallelism between two *loca sancta* which were strictly connected in the pilgrim's experience.⁶⁰

56 On the different kinds of connection between tombs and altars, cf. Yasin 2009, pp. 151–209.

57 Crowfoot 1941, pp. 28–29, for the existence of a north entrance, and Tsafirir 1993b, pp. 9–10, who thinks of yet another entrance from the south. Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, p. 192, dismisses the possible presence of an *oculus*, following Bagatti 1952, pp. 33–42; Bagatti 1971a, pp. 180–182. The latter interprets the archaeological evidence as pointing to the existence of a polygonal apse, instead of a self-standing octagon. This hypothesis was recently developed by Weber 2014, who, unlike Bagatti, agrees with the existence of an opening in the raised platform.

58 See especially Kühnel 1987, pp. 63–72 and Pullan 1998. In general on the representation of Bethlehem in Early Christian images cf. Farioli Campanati 1999.

59 On this identification, cf. Sahner 2009, p. 114; Steigerwald 2012.

60 Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, p. 192.

We are somewhat better informed about the interior of the Nativity church. Even if we know from some archaeological findings that the walls were simply covered with plaster,⁶¹ the pilgrim Egeria, writing around 390, stresses that Bethlehem, not unlike the other foundations by Constantine and Helena in the Holy Land, glittered with precious ornaments and furnishings and was embellished with gold, mosaics, and precious marbles. On the occasion of major feasts this décor was enhanced by an even more luxurious apparatus of gems, golden objects, and especially gold-embroidered silken curtains.⁶² It can be assumed that the latter may have looked like the tapestries and *camerae fulgentes* which are known to have embellished the walls and even the apses of other churches founded by the imperial court, such as the *ecclesia Salvatoris* and the Vatican basilica in Rome: such objects, known to us only through their representations in a number of fifth- and sixth-century pictorial works, stood out for their lack of figurative elements, yet they were much appreciated as the gold thread they were embellished with had the property of reflecting light in an especially efficacious way.⁶³ The periodical display of such silken curtains seems to indicate, in any case, that here as elsewhere the church interior was not necessarily meant to be decorated with monumental images.

Sumptuous ornaments were reserved, by contrast, for the floor paving. Consistent remnants of the latter, which extended to the whole of the nave and parts of the sanctuary, were discovered in 1934 and are now only partly visible below the wooden trapdoors put on the pavement on that same occasion. The more lavish parts are concentrated in the central nave and display two large carpets of colored panels embellished with a great variety of interlaces, meanders, and guilloches, framed within multiple ornamental bands decorated with geometric motifs, wave-pattern scrolls or wreaths



10 | Mosaic carpet with geometric and vegetal ornaments, detail of the nave floor, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 4th century

of leaves housing flowers and fruits |FIG. 10|. Smaller mosaic panels located at the easternmost end of the floor, close to the steps leading to the elevated *bema*, included Solomon's knots and, in one case, also the Greek acronym for Christ's name, ΙΧΘΥΣ, within a black square. A much less elaborate repertory of forms is employed in the fragments belonging to the side-aisles, which were mostly decorated with white tesserae of larger size, including panels with simpler ornaments. One of the best preserved is the net-like pattern with stylized roses, knots of Solomon, and lozenges on a white background discovered in the south inner aisle, close to the original western wall of the church. On the other hand, lavish decorations were to be seen in the gallery encircling the central octagon in the sanctuary. The surviving panel consists of three large panels,

61 Bagatti 1971a, p. 183.

62 Egeria, *Itinerarium*, 25:8, ed. Franceschini/Weber 1965, p. 71.

63 Guarducci 1981; Andaloro 2000, pp. 33–37. Even if the use of textiles in the décor of Constantinian churches is undisputed, the interpretation of the expression *camerae fulgentes* as hinting at tapestries is not accepted by all scholars: cf. Bisconti 2001–2002; Liverani 2003.



11 | Vegetal motifs and birds, detail of the north transept floor, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 4th century

the westernmost one displays a field dominated by a swastika meander motif with perspective-boxes and dissecting circles, set within a frieze of acanthus leaves housing fruits on a black background. The most distinctive elements, here as in the nave, are the bands of guilloche decorating the meanders: they are very prominent in the easternmost panel, where they extend to the outer frame and give shape to the octagonal medallions displaying images of birds and foliate motifs against a white background. In between is a triangular field embellished with a vine-trellis.⁶⁴

The dating of this floor is, in its turn, a matter of debate. The discovery of patches of white mosaic that are apparently superimposed on areas of worn threshold have led scholars to assume that the main decoration campaign took place in a somewhat later phase, in the late fourth or fifth century.⁶⁵ The closest stylistic parallels in the area of Palestine have been recognized in the mosaics of the Samaritan synagogue of Khirbet Samara, the first church of Saint Lazarus at Bethany from the late fourth century, the first church at Shiloh from ca. 410 and the first sanctuary on Mount Nebo (second half of the fourth – beginning of the fifth century) which stand out for their elaborate geometrical interlaces, which not infrequently are variously combined with naturalistic motifs rooted in the classical tradition. The rendering of figurative elements in such contexts was frequently described as bearing witness to a sort of intermediary or experimental phase, when forms were gradually being deprived of their volume and preference was given to such artistic devices as portrayal in profile, the black outlining of body parts or the use

64 Accurate descriptions, sketches, and photographic documentation in Harvey 1935, pp. 20–22 and pls XX, 92–100; Richmond 1936; Hamilton 1947, pp. 91–96. Cf. also Madden 2014, pp. 37–38.

65 Vincent 1937, pp. 93–104 (between late fourth and mid-fifth centuries); Kitzinger 1965, pp. 346–347, and Kitzinger 1970, p. 641 (mid-fifth century); Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, p. 164 (end of the fourth – early fifth century); Stekelis/Avi-Yonah/Tzaferis 1993, p. 206 (first half of the fifth century); Balty 1995, p. 95 (early fifth century); Dauphin 1997, p. 14 (early fifth century); Talgam 2014, pp. 157–159 (late fourth – early fifth century).



12 | Rinceux housing a dove, detail of the north transept floor, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 4th century

of a flat white lighting.⁶⁶ Yet, the accurate inspection of the surviving fragments, which have been mostly known through the black-and-white pictures made in the 1930s, reveals details that do not entirely fit in with this assessment.

Actually, different ways of rendering animated beings seem to coexist in the mosaic program. The definitely linear treatment of a bird and the nearby plants in the easternmost panel of the gallery mosaic of the octagon |FIG. 11| clashes with the three-quarter view used for a dove represented within one of the medallions formed by the band of acanthus leaves in the nearby, westernmost field |FIG. 12|. The naturalistic flavor of this image is evident: the animal is caught in the very act of picking a flower, and the proportions of its body are true-to-life. An accurate cleaning in a hopefully near future will probably enable us to appreciate better the different shades of white, orange, and red tesserae employed to simulate the volume of both the acanthus leaves and the forms housed within them.

The coexistence of peopled scrolls with large geometric carpets, as well as the incorporation of animated beings within abstract patterns, can hardly be considered to be specific to a later phase of mosaic pavement decoration in the Near East. A recent study laid emphasis on several connections of the Bethlehem program with works made in the Antioch area during the fourth century, which are revealed not only by the use of some distinctive motifs (such as the guilloche swastika meanders) and illusionistic features rooted in Hellenistic and Roman tradition, but also by the multi-panel configuration of the floor, which was a specific innovation of that period.⁶⁷ As a matter of fact, even the overlap of white marble over worn thresholds can be dismissed as a misinterpretation, given that it may have been due, as the British archaeologists originally suggested in the 1930s, to a late repair.⁶⁸ It can therefore be assumed, or at least not ruled out, that the pavement was made at the same time as the basilica in the 330s, and that its lavish forms were used as a source of inspiration for later church floors in Palestine. Given that no archaeological evidence as to the existence of a previous mosaic, even at a different bedding, has been found,⁶⁹ it would be difficult to imagine that it took several decades before the interior of this most important place was provided with a convenient paving.

THE NATIVITY CHURCH AND ITS TOPOGRAPHIC NETWORK

The presence of a large colored pavement undoubtedly enhanced the auratic power of the Nativity site. The Bethlehem complex dominated the village skyline with its imposing dimensions and was conceived as an extraordinary monumental frame to the

66 Talgam 2014, p. 158.

67 Madden 2012a.

68 Harvey 1937, pp. 12, 16, who gave his preference to a dating within Constantine's times.

69 Bagatti 1952, p. 29.

diminutive cave which the Son of God had chosen as his first abode on earth. Architecture structured the pilgrim's visit to the site as a gradual movement to the most worship-worthy hole in the ground enshrined in the innermost part of the church. The diffusion of pilgrimage and the development of stational liturgy helped to associate the holy sites with new forms of piety that implied a sort of "kinetic" approach to the divine sphere. The pilgrim Egeria in the fourth century, the fifth-century Armenian lectionary and the Georgian lectionary, a collection of different texts dating between the fifth and the eighth centuries, indicate that the Nativity church was included in the wider network of stations used in the processions performed by the Church of Jerusalem on the occasion of some major feasts: not surprisingly, it was the major goal of the journey that took place on Christmas and Epiphany, but it is known that also some minor sites played a role in such rites. One such was the so-called *Poimnion*, where pilgrims gathered on Christmas Eve.⁷⁰ This was identified, at least from Eusebius' times, with the field where the angel's announcement to the Shepherds had taken place. Its exact location in the neighborhoods of the present-day village of Beit Sahour, to the east of Bethlehem, is a matter of debate: the tradition firmly witnessed from the tenth century onwards associated it with the resort known in Arabic as Kanisat ar-Ra'wat ("the Shepherd's church"), yet excavations made by the Franciscans in the nineteenth century and again in 1951–1952 on a site known as Khirbet Siyar el-Ghanam ("the ruin of the sheep cote") led to the discovery of a cave and some ancient structures which have been interpreted as the original shrine.⁷¹ Another important place was the aforementioned *Kathisma*, where Mary's rest on the way to Bethlehem was also liturgically commemorated.⁷²

The territory of Bethlehem was dotted with memorial sites associated with Old Testament figures which could be viewed, from the perspective of *interpretatio Christiana*, as prefiguring Christ and

Mary. The tomb of Rachel, located on the way to Bethlehem and Hebron – the site of the burial cave of the Patriarchs, including Rachel's husband, Jacob – was honored by pilgrims coming from Jerusalem as a first step in their approach to the Nativity site: the holy woman who died giving birth to Benjamin on the way to Ephrath, i.e. Bethlehem (Gen 35, 19), was more specifically often described in Christian literature as a symbol of contemplative life and a personification of the *Ecclesia*, strongly associated with the Virgin Mary.⁷³ On the other hand, after visiting the Nativity church, pilgrims could step down to the north-eastern slope of the hill to approach the sepulchers of Jesse and David, already mentioned as important cult-sites in Eusebius' times. Later traditions located Solomon's burial there, too, and, from the sixth century onward, the place was included within a church devoted to David himself, whose associations with the Messianic meaning of Christ's birth venerated nearby must have been immediately evident to its visitors.⁷⁴

A controversial passage in Egeria's travelogue seems to indicate that the Nativity church was also used as a station in the rites of the Ascension feast, but it is possible that she may have confused the latter's date, related to the Easter cycle, with one belonging to the yearly cycle of commemorations, namely the Feast of the Holy Innocents, that probably took place on May 18, according to the early Jerusalemite calendar.⁷⁵ It is not clear if these rites also led to a form of topographical transcription from early times. The first reference

70 Kopp 1959, pp. 47–48, 58–59; Baldovin 1987, p. 50.

71 Bagatti 1952, pp. 238–242, 267–268; Corbo 1955; Tzaferis 1975; Katsimbini 1975; Bagatti 1983, pp. 45–48; Maraval 2011 [1985], p. 273; Corbo 1987.

72 Avner 2011; Avner 2015; Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 117–140.

73 Sered 1986; Strickert 2007.

74 Bagatti 1952, pp. 242–243; Kopp 1959, pp. 74–76.

75 Egeria, *Itinerarium*, 42, ed. Franceschini/Weber 1965, p. 84. Cf. Devos 1968, pp. 103–105; Baldovin 1987, pp. 89–90; Shalev-Hurvitz 2015, pp. 95–99.



13 | Skeletons unearthed in the southern grottoes, Bethlehem, Nativity church

occurs in the travelogue of the Piacenza anonymous (570), who hints at a collective sepulcher, housing the bones of the Innocents, which was apparently located close to David's burial site.⁷⁶ Yet, later seventh- and eighth-century texts hint at a location much closer to the Nativity church, within a grotto which could be also described as a "church": the expression "to the right" of the building indicates the underground caves located under the south transept of the basilica, whose funerary function was revealed by the discovery of many skeletons, albeit mostly of grown-up people |FIG. 13|. ⁷⁷

It must be stressed that, apart from the *Kathisma* and the Shepherds' Field, all other minor shrines visited by early pilgrims were essentially different in character from the Nativity church, inasmuch as they consisted in burial, rather than memorial sites. The old Jewish tradition of worship for some privileged tombs of prophets, biblical figures, and wise people was largely appropriated by the Christians and invested with new meanings.⁷⁸ Pilgrims were accustomed to paying homage to the sepulchers of eminent persons, even if they were not perceived as imbued with supernatural power. Moreover, many believers longed to be interred in the vicinity of both saints' tombs and the markers of holy events,

with the aim of getting a special blessing deemed to be advantageous for their souls: in Bethlehem, even the caves located to the north of the Nativity grotto were used from early times as *ad sanctos*-cemeteries.⁷⁹ This is corroborated by both archaeological data and textual evidence. Jerome reports that he honored Paula by setting up her sepulcher and providing it with two elegant Latin epitaphs in a narrow underground space located close to the Nativity cave.⁸⁰ Jerome's own tomb was also known to have been set up in vicinity of the grotto: the Piacenza anonymous, in 570, recorded that it had been made by the holy father himself very close to the entrance to the holy site.⁸¹ The fact that, a century later, Adamnán of Iona apparently located the tomb outside the basilica, close to King David's church, may perhaps be viewed as evidence of some significant alterations having taken place meanwhile in and around the holy site.⁸²

76 Piacenza anonymous, ed. Geyer 1965, p. 144.

77 Bagatti 1952, pp. 148–150; Kopp 1959, pp. 74–80.

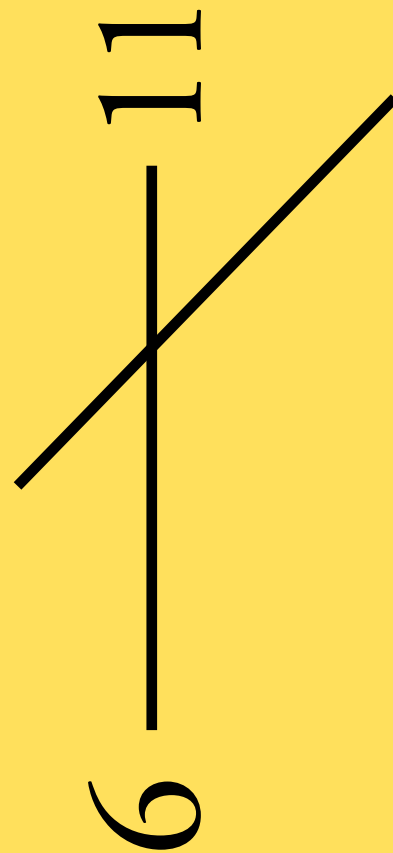
78 Jeremias 1958; Gonen 1998.

79 Bagatti 1952, pp. 135–148; Bagatti 1968, pp. 181–223.

80 Jerome, *Epistulae*, 108:33, ed. Hilberg 1996, II, pp. 350–351.

81 Piacenza anonymous, ed. Geyer 1965, p. 143: "*Hieronymus presbyter in ipso ore speluncae ipsam petram sculpivit et monumentum sibi fecit, ubi et positus est.*" Cf. Lanzoni 1921.

82 Adamnán of Iona, *De locis sanctis*, I:5, ed. Bieler 1965, p. 208. Cf. Bagatti 1952, pp. 137–138; Kopp 1959, pp. 44–45.



The Second *Mise-en-Scène* 6th–11th Centuries

DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

The representation of the Nativity church in the mid-sixth century cartographic mosaic of the church of Madaba (Jordan) displays what seems to be the highly stylized silhouette of a basilican church, with no hint of an octagon **FIG. 14**: if such an unassuming appearance is not simply due to an oversight on the part of the artist, it can be inferred that, by this time, the church was no longer perceived as especially sumptuous and had already undergone some major change. It must be stressed, anyway, that this detail has been used in scholarship as a major argument to fix the dating of the Madaba map itself sometimes between the late 550s and 565, the last year of Justinian's rule over the Byzantine Empire.¹

The involvement of the Byzantine Emperor in the rebuilding of the Nativity church has been a matter of debate since at least

¹ Avi-Yonah 1954, p. 18; Piccirillo 1993, p. 34; Madden 2012b. Cf., anyway, the later dating in Piccirillo 1999, p. 22.



14 | The Nativity church in Bethlehem, detail of the Madaba Map, church of Saint George, Madaba (Jordan), ca. 550–565

the seventeenth century² and was finally corroborated by the different building phases brought to light during the 1934 excavations.³ Oddly enough, this major initiative is recorded in no contemporary source and its first mention is to be found in the Arabic chronicle of Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria (in the world Sa'id ibn Batriq), which was probably written in 938.⁴ The specific passage, which may be an interpolation from an earlier, unknown author, was introduced as an expansion of the narrative about Saint Sabas' journey to Constantinople in 531 to plead with the Emperor to lighten the taxes on the people of Palestine, who had suffered much from the destruction caused by the Samaritan revolt of 529 (even if the text speaks of the eleventh year of Justinian's rule, that is 538).⁵ The Samaritans were a religious group still well rooted in their ancestral lands on the mountainous ridge to north of Judaea: they described themselves as the true heirs to the ancient, pre-exile Israelites, accepted the legitimacy solely of the five books of the Pentateuch in their own textual version, and located the Temple of God on the top of Mount Gerizim, in the vicinity of Neapolis/Nablus. After their persecution by Emperor Zeno in 484–489, which eventually

led to the transformation of the Gerizim Temple into a church, the Samaritans rose in 529 in a major insurrection which was violently repressed by Justinian. Contemporary sources mention that several ecclesiastical buildings were destroyed during the riots, but no mention of Bethlehem can be found before Eutychius' times.⁶

The first part of the Arabic text is a translation of the corresponding passage in Cyril of Scythopolis' *Life of Saint Sabas*: the holy monk not only asked the Emperor to lighten the taxes and to finance the reconstruction of the churches set on fire by the Samaritans, but also took that opportunity to ask for financial support of the building works of the Nea church in Jerusalem and the erection of a hospice for pilgrims in the vicinity of the Holy Sepulchre.⁷ Eutychius adds that the envoy entrusted by Justinian was also asked to use the revenues of Palestine for the reconstruction of the Nativity church, apparently not because it had suffered damage during the insurrection, yet rather on aesthetic grounds: it looked too small. Here is the passage in Eutychius' own words:

And the King also ordered his envoy to pull down the church of Bethlehem, which was a small one, and to build it again of such splendor, size and beauty that none even in the Holy City should surpass it [...]. And he [Justinian's agent in the Holy Land] pulled down the church of Bethlehem and built it as it is now. And when he had done all this he returned to the King. And the King bade him describe how he had built the church at Bethlehem. And when he had described it the King

2 Lethaby 1910, pp. 13–17; Pickett 2014, pp. 35–40; Bacci 2015, pp. 47–48, 50.

3 See especially Richmond 1938, pp. 67–72; Vincent 1937, pp. 104–115.

4 Eutychius of Alexandria, *Annals*, 252, ed. Breydy 1985, pp. 106–108. This text, though already used by the Jesuit Michel Nau in 1676 (Nau 1757, pp. 400–401), to provide a date for the church, was first given special emphasis in modern scholarship by Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 118–119.

5 Pummer 2002, pp. 431–432.

6 Shahid 1995, I, pp. 82–95.

7 Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Saint Sabas*, 71–72, ed. Schwartz 1939, pp. 174–175.

by no means liked his description. And he was very angry and said, “You have taken the money and pocketed it yourself. The church you have built is dark and poorly constructed. You have not built it as I wished, nor have you dealt faithfully with me”. He then commanded him to be beheaded.⁸

How reliable is this text, written four centuries later than the events described, for the history of the basilica? The story has undoubtedly a moralizing purpose, inasmuch as it aims to stress Justinian’s higher moral qualities as opposed to his functionaries’ almost endemic corruption. And indeed, the Emperor’s disappointment is hardly understandable, given that the Nativity church was regularly celebrated by later sources as one of the most beautiful in the Holy Land. Given that a similar story was told about Justinian’s patronage of the Sinai Monastery, it is possible that the same narrative structure was attributed to the reconstruction of the Bethlehem church, with the aim of laying special emphasis on the Emperor’s enduring virtue.⁹ Nevertheless, it is also possible that, when dealing with Palestinian issues, Eutychius relied on an earlier, now lost Syrian chronicle about ecclesiastical history.¹⁰ Incidentally, it is probably not by chance that his hint at the works in Bethlehem was associated with Sabas, an eminent figure of Palestinian monasticism and the founder of different monasteries in the Judean desert, the most famous of which was the Great Laura of Mar Saba.¹¹ The latter, located at a close distance from Bethlehem, was a prominent center of religious and literary activity in Palestine throughout the Byzantine and Islamic periods: it may be that, on account of such evident connections, the Patriarch of Alexandria was troubled by the lack of hints at the site of Christ’s birth in his source, Cyril of Scythopolis, and decided therefore to integrate the text in his own way.

Undoubtedly, it is striking that no mention of the Nativity church was made by the historian Procopius of Caesarea, a native of *Palaestina prima* and the author of a meticulous panegyric on Justin-

ian’s building campaigns. Procopius’ silence was interpreted either as evidence of Eutychius’ historical unreliability, or on the contrary as a *terminus ante quem non* for the dating of the church reconstruction. It must be stressed, anyway, that, given Procopius’ largely rhetorical purposes, his text cannot be viewed as a systematic listing of all architectural initiatives of the imperial court: it is known that he skipped over many of them and tended to play down the role of Empress Theodora.¹² Nevertheless, it is admittedly odd that he records the Emperor’s engagement in other building works in Bethlehem – the city walls and a monastery in honor of Saint John the Baptist – while ignoring the city’s most prominent landmark.¹³

Unless Procopius’ omission was intentional for some reason unknown to us, only two solutions seem possible: either the church was constructed slightly later, or it was already standing in Justinian’s times, which would imply that Eutychius’ story should be considered thoroughly unreliable. Once again, our knowledge is hampered by the insufficient archaeological information available to scholars. In 1934, the British found remnants of two curving walls under the north and south transepts |PLAN III| which ostensibly belonged neither to the first nor to the second building phase, yet were to be dated sometimes in-between, given that they were broken by the present walls and that the northern one also encroached on the mosaic floor.¹⁴ A recent study proposed that the latter could

8 English translation after Hamilton 1947, p. 19.

9 The historical unreliability of Patriarch Eutychius is assumed and emphasized, on rather unclear grounds, by all those scholars who call into question the Justinianic dating of the Basilica: Weigand 1911, pp. 19–24; Weigand 1915, pp. 134–136; Weigand 1923, pp. 198–199; Schneider 1941, pp. 88–90; Pickett 2014, p. 39.

10 Howard-Johnston 2010, p. 337.

11 Phokylides 1927; Hirschfeld 1992, pp. 26–28. On Mar Saba as cultural center cf. Patrich 2001b.

12 Feissel 2000; Angelova 2015, p. 270.

13 Procopius, *De Aedificiis*, v.9.13, ed. Dewing and Downey 1971, p. 358. On the Justinianic town walls cf. Prag 2000, pp. 179–180.

14 Harvey 1935, pp. 18–19; Richmond 1938, p. 71; Bagatti 1952, p. 33.

be viewed as remnants of a trefoil-shaped east end made sometimes between the fourth and the sixth, yet more probably in the fifth century, that is in the age of the alleged redecoration of the pavement with new mosaics. This east end would have existed until the Crusader period, when it came, as the author suggests, to be substituted with the present triconch.¹⁵

There are, anyway, strong objections to this proposal. If parts of the present building were to date from a later period, evident signs of discontinuity should be detected in its masonry. Yet, the archaeometrical investigations made in 2010 yielded no clear evidence to this: on the contrary, they indicated that the present building is basically homogeneous and belonging therefore to one and the same construction phase, with the only exception of the western end which underwent significant restorations in the Crusader and even post-Crusader periods.¹⁶ Second, an analysis of the overall measurements of the building and its parts indicated that the basic unit of 0.32 cm, corresponding to the early Byzantine foot, was used throughout the structure.¹⁷ Third, if we assume, as suggested above, that no redecoration of the pavement ever took place and that the present floor is the Constantinian one, it can be inferred that the curving walls were erected after the fourth century, given that they are not flush with, yet superimposed to, the fourth-century mosaics. At the same time, they are earlier than the nave walls, given that they intrude into the space delimited by the latter. The only way to overcome such inconsistencies would be to calculate that the Constantinian church was rebuilt sometime in the fifth or sixth century, with the destruction of the octagon and its substitution with a trefoil-end, and again fully reconstructed in the Crusader period, in both its nave and sanctuary.

But this also can be firmly ruled out. The existence of three deep and lavishly decorated conches was mentioned in the pre-Crusader period by the Latin pilgrim Hyacinth (probably writing

in the mid-eleventh century).¹⁸ Moreover, in 808, Charlemagne's envoys took precise measurements of the length of the transept: as it was recently demonstrated, the obtained measure of 23 *dextri* corresponded to 35.91 m, which is surprisingly close to the real one (35.81 m) and even more accurate than what can be found in modern publications. It clearly shows that the east end was already of the same dimensions and shape as today.¹⁹ Further evidence was recently yielded by the wooden elements used as architraves (or tie-beams) resting upon the columns of the central nave, side-aisles and transepts. Dendrochronological and radiocarbon analysis revealed that the latter are made of cedar of Lebanon and that they can be dated to the year 605, with a confidence limit of ca. 60 years earlier or later, i.e. between 545 and 665.²⁰ Given that they are embedded within the architectural body of the basilica itself, their dating is most clearly also that of the walls housing them in both the western and eastern parts of the church.

The dating of the building can be calculated more precisely on historical grounds. It would be hard to imagine that the reconstruction could have taken place in the first half of the seventh

15 Pickett 2014, pp. 39–44, who resurrects a hypothesis first formulated by Swift 1936. The architectural evidence that clashes with a Crusader dating was already discussed and pointed out by Harvey/Harvey 1937, pp. 15–16. Cf. Vincent 1937, pp. 112–113, who interpreted the curving walls as clue to an architectural *pentimento* having probably occurred in the fifth century; cf. also Ovadia 1970, p. 36, n. 1. Vionnet 1938, pp. 100–103, interpreted the north curving wall as the only remnant of a hypothetical second-century Temple of Adonis. Alternative datings of the reconstruction were proposed by Schneider 1941 (early sixth century), Restle 1966, col. 611 (late fifth century), Brenk 1977, pp. 193, 195 (early sixth century).

16 Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012.

17 Chen 1979.

18 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205. The text was originally thought to date from the mid-eighth century (Wilkinson 1977, p. 11) or generically from the eighth or ninth century (García Villada 1925; Campos 1957). Yet, a later date in the eleventh century has been proposed by Biddle 1994, p. 140, n. 14, on the assumption that the text describes the Aedicula of the Anastasis in the way it had been rebuilt after al-Hakim's destruction in 1009.

19 McCormick 2011, p. 114; cf. *ibidem*, pp. 99–102. In Ovadia 1970, p. 37, the length of the transept is approximated to 36 m. I am relying here on the new measurements taken on the occasion of the 2010 survey.

20 Bernabei/Bontadi 2012, pp. 58–59.

century, as this was a highly turbulent period, which started with the Persian plundering of Palestine and massacre of the Jerusalem Christians in 614 and ended with the Islamic conquest of the Near East in 638. The involvement of Justinian, who is known for his policy of architectural founding, is undoubtedly much more likely. We can conjecture that Procopius' silence about these works may be due to the Emperor's manifest disappointment about the final form of the building, hinted at by Eutychius of Alexandria. Otherwise, it should be assumed that the building campaign was initiated after the historian had finished his book, i.e. after 560 according to most scholars²¹ or even earlier, around 554–555 according to an alternative hypothesis.²²

The reconstruction works at Bethlehem could therefore have started in the last years of Justinian's rule and have lasted beyond his death in 565. The 1934 discovery of ashes and fragments of burnt wood covering the Constantinian mosaic floor confirmed that the original church was seriously damaged by a violent fire and indicated that this event occasioned the need for its rebuilding.²³ Yet, if the destruction took place in 529, one wonders why the Emperor would have waited for two or three decades before finally ordering the beginning of works, given that they must have started not before ca. 545, the earliest date provided by radiocarbon analysis. Another textual source, Cyril of Scythopolis' *Life of John the Hesychast*, bears witness to the existence of a narthex, where that monk from Mar Saba monastery, in the year 532, had the vision of the soul of an unknown holy man being brought to heaven by an angel.²⁴ Unless Cyril was wrong (he wrote his text several years later, in 557)²⁵ or made a rather improper use of the word narthex to hint at the covered, eastern portico of the old Constantinian atrium, we must infer from this that a thorough reshaping of the holy site was taking place in that period.

It can be supposed that the reconstruction started immediately after 529 and consisted of the erection of a smaller church with trefoil-end, which left the Emperor unsatisfied on account of its inadequate dimensions and was subsequently demolished, to be substituted with the present one in Justinian's later years. This hypothesis would provide an explanation for both the mysterious curving walls and Procopius' reticence: given the rhetorical purposes of his panegyric, it would have been definitely improper to mention a failed architectural program. Another possibility, however, is that Patriarch Eutychius mistook the Samaritan insurrection of 529 for a later one that occurred in 556: in that year, many churches were set on fire in Caesarea Maritima and some historians consider this as a more likely date for the destruction of the Nativity church.²⁷ If this is the case, it may be assumed that the restoration works began in the following years. It may also be that the need for new works was prompted by some damage caused by the very destructive earthquake which devastated Palestine in 551.²⁸ Cyril of Scythopolis' hint in 557 at the narthex would bear witness to a new distinctive feature of the reconstructed building. Moreover, the Piacenza anonymous' passage concerning the stairway to the holy cave, which was "very narrow" as in previous times, would indirectly indicate that, still in 570, the setting of the sanctuary was unaltered.²⁹ If one considers that the builders of the Nea church

21 Bury 1923, II, p. 428; Downey 1947, pp. 181–183; Whitby 1985, pp. 145–147. Cf. Madden 2012b, p. 498.

22 Stein 1949, p. 837.

23 Harvey 1936, p. 31; Harvey/Harvey 1937, p. 14; Hamilton 1947, p. 21.

24 Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of John the Hesychast*, ed. Schwartz 1939, p. 224.

25 Peristeris 2001, p. 172.

26 Schneider 1941, p. 90, uses this evidence to support his dating of the present-day church in the early sixth century.

27 Cf. Stein 1949, pp. 373–374; Crown 1986, p. 136.

28 Amiran/Arieh/Turcotte 1994, p. 266.

29 Piacenza anonymous, ed. Geyer 1965, p. 143.

in Jerusalem took twelve years – between 531 and 543 – to accomplish their work,³⁰ an analogous period of time can be assumed for the reconstruction of the Nativity church.

MOST NOBLE APSES AND GLITTERING COLUMNS

In 603–604 the future Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, described his emotionally-charged visit to the Nativity church in the following, poetic way:

When I enter that wonderful four-sided atrium
And that sacred building with three most noble apses
(τρικόγχου),
I will rejoice.

At the sight of so many columns glittering with gold
And the mosaic work so skillfully made,
The clouds of my pain will disperse.

I will glance above at the spectacle,
At the ceiling twinkling like the stars,
For by means of artistic skills
The beauty of heaven shines there.³¹

These verses are eloquent enough as to confirm that, at the beginnings of the seventh century, the church was finished and was perceived as a large, resplendent, and sumptuous building. Moreover, they bear clear witness to the substitution of the octagon by a “triconch”, a term which implies the existence of three apses of similar size in the east end of the building.³² The plan adopted by Justinian’s architects |PLAN I| was undoubtedly very innovative for Palestine and it is possible that it took inspiration from the basilicas with triconch-ending which were fairly widespread especially in nearby Egypt.³³ The new setting proved to evoke very efficaciously

the site-specific holiness of the cave. In a sense, the liturgical function of the upper building was made much more evident: pilgrims were glad to acknowledge that the basilica did not differ from ordinary churches in its being made “in the form of a cross”, as remarked by an eighth-century Latin visitor.³⁴ Nevertheless, at the same time the building was unparalleled: it consisted of a unique large room, shaped by the almost square central bay, the three arms of transept and choir, the three apses attached to them, and the eastern extensions of the side-aisles. Richard Krautheimer described it as a sort of mid-way solution between a cross-shaped transept and a trefoil-shaped building.³⁵

The basic aim of this solution was probably to provide the building with a “triconch-like” appearance, even if it did not thoroughly conform to standard models. The use of three-apsed rooms as architectural devices to mark holy sites and lay emphasis on their special status was indeed widespread enough in martyrial buildings, even if they mostly functioned as side-annexes rather than as east-ends of congregational churches.³⁶ The specific context at Bethlehem probably encouraged architects to combine a more usual cross-shaped plan, suitable for a liturgical space, with three monumental apses which could remind visitors of the distinctive, site-specific holiness of the *locus sanctus*. It is known that the addition of apses to transepts was regarded in the sixth century as a very efficacious way to enhance the worship-worthiness of a church: in 571 Justin II

30 Tsafir 2000, p. 150.

31 Sophronius, *Anacreontics*, 19, ed. Migne 1856–1866, cols 3812–3813.

32 As remarked above, the three tribunes are also mentioned by the eleventh-century pilgrim Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

33 Kinney 2016. Losito 2014, pp. 72–73, associates the triconch-type with the basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, without explaining on which grounds Justinian’s rebuilding should have taken inspiration from such a Roman model.

34 Hugeburc, *Life of Saint Willibald*, 22, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, pp. 266–267.

35 Krautheimer 1986, pp. 266–267; cf. also Alchermes 2005, p. 358.

36 See, for example, the martyrial annex in Tebessa, Algeria: Yasin 2009, pp. 161–162. Cf. also Pickett 2014, p. 40.



15 | The so-called “School of Saint Jerome” in the Armenian monastery, Bethlehem

embellished the church of Our Lady of Blachernae in Constantinople in the same way³⁷ and an analogous solution can be detected in the late sixth or early seventh century memorial church of Saint Titus in Gortyna, Crete.³⁸ Indeed, the unusual plan of the Nativity church is deemed to have exerted an impact on some important later buildings: around 640, when the Armenian *katholikos* Nerses III Tayetsi reconstructed Dvin Cathedral, a church celebrated as the “mother of all churches of Armenia”, the introduction of monumental apses to mark the arms of the transept was possibly intended to imitate a distinctive feature of the Palestinian church.³⁹

The building campaign promoted by Justinian and his followers at Bethlehem can partly be reconstructed, once again, by interpreting the partial data collected during the 1932 and 1934 excavations. The latter made clear that the nave was lengthened by one bay and the façade wall was consequently rebuilt farther westwards. The addition of a covered narthex to the west end of the building implied the removal of the old atrium and its reconstruction as a four-sided porch farther west. The corner pier and three



16 | Basis of column from the Justinianic atrium, courtyard of the Nativity Church, Bethlehem, 6th century

of the columns belonging to the south side of this atrium can still be seen walled up in a room annexed to the vestibule of the Armenian monastery and in the so-called “Library” or “School of Saint Jerome” within the monastery itself (FIG. 15).⁴⁰ Some more bases and fragments of columns were found during the excavations and placed against the wall of the church (FIG. 16). Justinian’s new atrium extended to the western half of the present-day courtyard, as is still indicated in the plan sketched by the Franciscan friar Bernardino Amico in the late sixteenth century (PLAN IV). It was preceded by a forecourt surrounded as well by colonnades, whose western limit corresponded approximately to that of the modern road separating the courtyard from Manger Square.⁴¹

37 Janin 1969, pp. 162, 167–168.

38 See especially Baldini 2009, pp. 656–657, with further sixth-century comparanda.

39 D’Onofrio 1973, pp. 102–103; Kazaryan 2012, II, pp. 426–428.

40 Harvey 1935, pp. 17–18 and figs 56–59; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 152. Some of the bases, capitals and columns reemployed in the School of Saint Jerome also probably belonged to Justinian’s atrium.

41 Hamilton 1934, pp. 3–5; Richmond 1938, pp. 67–68; Vincent 1937, pp. 105–108; Hamilton 1947, pp. 44–47; Bagatti 1952, pp. 16–20.



17 | Molding of the central door, façade, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 6th century

The atrium gave access to the western entrance of the church. The latter underwent much change in the Crusader and post-Crusader periods: yet the upper gable of the Justinianic façade and the three molded doorways of the narthex can still be recognized. The central one was bigger, yet framed like the other two by a cornice decorated with parallel listels and cyma reversa moldings (FIG. 17).⁴² In the nave, the floor level was heightened and covered with marble: a number of post-Crusader pilgrims' travelogues report that the pavement was composed of black and white square slabs, whereas multicolored marble revetments could be seen on the lower portions of the nave walls.⁴³ Stylobates (or longitudinal foundation walls), breaking through the Constantinian mosaics, were built directly upon the rock: blocks of stone set at regular intervals upon them provided a support for the four rows of columns giving shape to the side-aisles. Analogous structures were also set up in the transepts.⁴⁴

The fifty columns of the basilica (44 in the aisles and 6 in the transepts) are monolithic and 4.45 m high (with bases and capitals

5.40). They are made of a very specific type of local hard stone, distinctively veined in red. The use of this material further corroborates the dating of the building in the sixth century: it can be identified with the hard rock, known by modern Palestinian masons as *mizzi ahmar* ("red stone"), which was quarried in the area to the north of Jerusalem, but also in the vicinity of Tantur, on the road to Bethlehem. Because of its hardness, this stone was almost never used before the nineteenth century, when modern technology made its quarrying easier. Nonetheless, it is known that it came to be used by Justinian's architects working in the Holy Land. As Procopius informs us in his description of works at the Nea church in Jerusalem, a major challenge was the unavailability of columns of adequate size to support the roofing system of large buildings, given that it proved to be impossible to transport them by sea. The unexpected discovery of a natural supply of stone looking like "the flames of fire" near the Holy City was therefore welcomed as a miracle. In spite of its hardness, the *mizzi ahmar* had the extraordinary advantage of being available in long, thick beds that enabled the making of monolithic columns. They were used to embellish both the Nea and the Nativity church.⁴⁵

The reddish columns rest upon bases and are topped with capitals notable for their absolute loyalty to the standard Corinthian type (FIG. 18), in the specific Eastern Mediterranean variant that is supposed to stem from the ornaments of Emperor Diocletian's palace in Split. It consists of eight large and eight minor-size acanthus leaves: between them are eight stalks with helices and volutes

42 Harvey 1911, pp. 1–2; Lethaby 1910, pp. 20–21; Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 43–58; Vincent 1937, p. 108; Bagatti 1952, p. 23.

43 Bacci 2015, p. 42. Cf. also Bagatti 1952, pp. 44–45, 57–58. The first mention of the marble floor is in Hyacinth, eleventh century, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

44 Harvey 1935, p. 19; Richmond 1936, p. 79; Richmond 1938, p. 68; Vincent 1936, p. 554; Vincent 1937, pp. 105–108.

45 Tsafirir 2000, pp. 162–164.

springing from them. The corner volutes support the slightly curving abacus, in whose center is displayed a hemispheric-shaped flower housing a cross. On account of their most evident classicism, they were not infrequently thought to be fourth-century capitals from the earlier Constantinian building that had been re-employed in the new Justinianic structure.⁴⁶ But a more accurate inspection betrays that no real effort was made at making visible the curving shape of the *kalathos* and that several elements, such as stalks and intermediate spaces, were left smooth and not carved. Two small details have long since been identified as distinctive marks of the Palestinian version of the Corinthian capital, namely the small triangular form (the so-called *Zwickelschuppe*) between the smaller and bigger helices and the lily-like motif displayed on the corners.⁴⁷ It has been demonstrated that the latter features became popular especially in the fifth century⁴⁸ and still survived in Justinian's times: most notably, they were used for the colonnade of the southern part of the Jerusalem *cardo maximus*, erected most probably in the same times as the Nea church in 531–543.⁴⁹ It is therefore hardly surprising that the probably Palestinian-native stone-cutters working at Bethlehem made use of this Corinthian type, albeit in a quite stylized form, instead of the innovative, *à jour*-decorated capitals employed in contemporary Constantinople.

Patriarch Sophronius' hint at the sumptuous appearance of the columns "glittering with gold" is confirmed by the remnants of gilding that are still visible on the leaf-ribs. Traces of gilding and color pigments can be detected also on the wooden architraves located above them.⁵⁰ These richly decorated beams have received scant attention in scholarship. Prior to the present-day restorations, they were mostly concealed by plastering: visitors had therefore the feeling of seeing purely trabeated colonnades akin to those typical of Late Roman architecture and, on account of this, the church



18 | Corinthian capital in the south inner colonnade of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 6th century

came to be described as a late, isolated offspring of this tradition.⁵¹ However, the archaism of this solution was only apparent, because even in Bethlehem as in most contemporary buildings the weight of the upper walls was borne not by the wooden lintels, yet by arcades, or more specifically by low, relieving arches, springing from blocks of stones set upon the capitals, which were partly walled up and hidden as well under the plastering in later periods.⁵²

The wooden architraves, made of Lebanese cedar, were probably introduced as tie-beams whose basic purpose was to consolidate the structure and enable it to resist tension, especially that of earthquakes. They consist of three beams set side by side, the outer

46 Weigand 1915, pp. 130–132; Watzinger 1933–1935, II, pp. 121–122; Kautzsch 1936, pp. 100–114; Richmond 1936, pp. 65, 68; Vincent 1937, pp. 104–115.

47 Weigand 1911, p. 80; Weigand 1915, p. 131; Weigand 1914–1919, pp. 190–201.

48 Weiland 1998, p. 822.

49 Avigad 1980, pp. 221–229.

50 Oral communication by Marcello Piacenti and Susanna Sarmati.

51 Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 83–84; Fraser 1979, p. 264.

52 Harvey 1935, p. 10.



19 | Wooden architrave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 6th century

parts of which are also decorated. On the vertical sides |FIG. 19| the ornaments include, from top to bottom, a smooth listel, a frieze of rinceaux including roundish fruits, a sequence of globular motifs, and two bands of rosettes shaped by leaflets arranged in such a way as to form lozenges.⁵³ The artist relied on a repertory of forms which was rooted in the artistic traditions of the Christian Near East: the lozenge-shaped rosettes compare, for example, with fifth- and sixth-century Coptic stone lintels, whereas the foliate motifs may be understood as definitely stylized variants of the

friezes with acanthus leaves housing pomegranates, which are also frequent in Egypt.⁵⁴

In the intrados |FIG. 20|, the beam is decorated with a band of interlacing scrolls shaping medallions where acanthus leaves are symmetrically arranged around eight-petal rosettes: in the middle of this band stands a laurel wreath (or crown of victory) housing

53 Weigand 1915, p. 127.

54 Atalla 1989, II, figs on pp. 102, 104–105.



20 | Intrados of a wooden architrave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 6th century

a cross. A nail-hole visible in the latter's center suggests that, from the very beginning, it was meant to accommodate hooks for lamp-chains. Some of the architraves display a particularly elegant variant where the scrolls spring out of cornucopiae and are embellished with pearl-dotted borders. The combination of such motifs is frequently encountered in both Egypt and the wider area of Syria and Palestine and was appropriated also in the decoration of early Islamic monuments in Jerusalem in the Umayyad period.⁵⁵

Pre-Crusader sources are particularly silent about church furnishings. Sophronius lays emphasis on the glittering appearance of the interior, yet he mentions only vaguely the presence of mosaic decorations, whereas he clearly describes the beauty of the painted ceiling shining like a starred heaven: the word used, *καλάθωσις*, is normally meant to hint at lacunar structures.⁵⁶ The eleventh-century pilgrim Hyacinth reported that it was thoroughly painted and carved, and covered with lead on the exterior.⁵⁷ The early history of this roof is unknown: it was probably from the very beginning a wooden one, covered with lead on the outside, yet the dendro-chronological analyses indicate that the earliest of its beams, unlike the nave architraves, date from a refurbishment made around 1164, whereas the rest of them can be traced back to the major restorations made between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵⁸

According to a much later, fourteenth-century source, a “colonnnette with a globe on it” stood in the very middle of the church.⁵⁹ This location was associated, from the sixth century onward, with structures, known in Greek as *stavrodochoi*, that were instrumental to private and liturgical worship of the holy cross: they symbolically imitated the omphalos-like function attributed in Jerusalem to the Rock of Golgotha, where pilgrims could see a monumental cross, embellished with gold and gems and supported by a column. The use of such structures is known from very distant areas, including Cappadocia, Georgia, Crete, and Western Europe, and it can be assumed that they originated in usages rooted in the Palestinian holy sites.⁶⁰ It can therefore be assumed that something similar existed also in the Nativity church.

THE SUPERPOSITION OF SACRED SPACE AND HOLY SITE

All visitors standing in the central nave were probably struck by the unusual form of the sanctuary |PLAN III|. This was described by pilgrims as a podium for the altar standing directly above the cave: to one of them it looked like a sort of monumental stone.⁶¹ Its eastern end was circular and mirrored the shape of the nearby apse, where remnants of a *synthronon*, a structure consisting of two or more rows of benches or seats for the clergy attending

55 Hamilton 1949, p. 90; Rosen-Ayalon 1989, pp. 41–42; Talgam 2004, p. 87.

56 Du Cange 1688, col. 546; Goet/Gundermann 1878, p. 337.

57 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

58 Bernabei/Bontadi 2012, pp. 59–60.

59 Niccolò da Poggibonsi (1346), ed. Lanza and Troncarelli 1990, p. 80: “Nel mezzo della detta chiesa si è uno colonnetto con un pomo di sopra”.

60 Oswald 1969; Pallas 1978; Pallas 1979; Gratziou 1998; Luchterhandt 2007; Bacci 2016a.

61 Bernhard the Monk, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, p. 317. Cf. Epiphanius of Constantinople, ed. Donner 1971, pp. 70–71, and the ninth- or tenth-century Armenian description of the Holy Sites (Wilkinson 1977, p. 201), who both describe the cave as located below the altar. See also Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 112.

the mass, were also found.⁶² The limits of its western end are not exactly known, but it is assumed that they did not extend to the central nave. The eleventh-century pilgrim Hyacinth the Presbyter mentions the presence of “chancels” (*cancelli*) surrounding the platform,⁶³ and it is possible that some kind of barrier or *templon*-like structure separated the central nave from the sanctuary. Some scholars proposed that such *cancelli* may have consisted of a bronze grille, on the assumption that the latter may have originally been closed with the bronze doors presently located at the top of the stairways to the grotto, which look much like the valves of an originally double door.⁶⁴ However, this interpretation seems to neglect the presence of bronze doors in the modern location from early times, as unambiguously mentioned by Hyacinth.⁶⁵ Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that the original enclosure may have been made of marble.

The east end of the building, unlike ordinary Byzantine churches, was not completely separated from the nave, as pilgrims of both clerical and lay status had to go through it in order to access the cave. Whereas Hyacinth seems to indicate that he stepped down from the north transept, Bernhard the Monk reports that visitors used to enter from the south and exit from the north side.⁶⁶ On account of their precious material, the doors closing the stairway openings undoubtedly helped to underscore the cultic importance of the place. They stood out for their elegant pierced decoration, which allowed viewers to gaze through [FIG. 21]. Their design is much reminiscent of motifs already encountered in the wooden beams: large crosses are displayed in the center of three vertically arranged medallions within lozenges shaped by intersecting half circles, which, in their turn, house three-lobed leaves. Smaller circles enclosing crosses fill the space between the medallions and the frame. Analogous forms are frequently encountered in Byzantine metalwork and sculptures from the fifth through the seventh centuries.⁶⁷



21 | Southern stairway of the holy cave with the 6th century bronze door on top, Nativity church, Bethlehem

In general terms, the restoration aimed at laying emphasis on the central role of liturgical life. The church was reshaped in such a way as to make it more suitable for the performance of rites. Non-liturgical activities associated with pilgrimage and individual devotions were shifted to the underground *locus sanctus*. If there had really been an *oculus* in Constantine's times to enable pilgrims to glance at the cave below, the latter was now closed and the visual approach to the holy site was therefore replaced by a more direct, physical experience of the site-specific sanctity of Christ's birthplace. Access to the grotto was provided by two new stairways

62 Richmond 1938, pp. 69–70;

63 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

64 Harvey/Harvey 1937, p. 13; Hamilton 1947, p. 21; Jacoby 1990, p. 124.

65 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205: “*grados vero per quos descendimus ad praesepe xpi sunt. Duo ostea erea ibi sunt*”.

66 Bernhard the Monk, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, p. 317; Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson, p. 205.

67 Jäger 1930; Jacoby 1990, pp. 123–124.

located respectively to the north-east and to the south, the latter functioning as the main entrance for visitors.⁶⁸ The former, narrow flight of steps in the central nave was presumably walled up at the same moment. In this way, the holy site that worked as the main cult-object and the space reserved for ritual activity were clearly separated, whereas, at the same time, emphasis was laid on their architectural juxtaposition along the same vertical axis. A precious altar located on a monumental podium, with a large apse on its background, now dominated the cave and worked as the main visual focus of the sacred space. In a way, this suggested that individual worship for a material site, though certainly advantageous for bodies and souls, was not sufficient to obtain salvation, unless it was associated with the mediating function of the liturgy.

In this respect, the choice of framing the circular-ended altar space within a triconch and the multiplication of hemispherical apses can be understood not only as an explicit hint at the Trinitarian doctrine, underscoring the Son of God's divinity in the place of His human Incarnation, but also as an architectural strategy to evoke a distinctive mark of the grotto, namely the latter's roundish, concave shape. Since Eusebius' times, the symbolism of caves had been enriched with many new meanings. It was associated with Palestinian monasticism, which privileged caves as dwellings for anchorites and holy men, and had become a sort of standard location for the increasingly multiplying memorial sites associated with minor events of the Gospel narrative: in the area of Bethlehem alone, caves were distinctive marks of the Shepherds' Field and the grave of the Holy Innocents. The combination of buildings and hallowed grottoes became widespread in Byzantine architecture from the sixth century onward.⁶⁹

Moreover, the auratic power of grottoes came to be exploited in mystagogical literature – a specific Byzantine genre devoted to the allegoric interpretation of liturgical rites and their architectural

settings. Already John Chrysostom compared the altar table to the manger where Jesus' body was laid and invited believers to follow in the steps of the Magi when participating in the Mass.⁷⁰ In later times, more systematic attempts were made to transform the church space into a sort of surrogate holy topography. The eighth-century *Historia Mystagogica*, attributed to Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople, described Christian churches as material symbols of the Christian community – God's real dwelling on earth in Saint Paul's terms – and as "heavens on earth", where the divine sphere was evoked and sacred history was made visible through the performance of the Eucharistic rites. In this respect, the altar space, as well as its individual parts and furnishings, were viewed as allegorical indicators of the major events of Christ's Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection. The conch was accordingly said to owe its semi-circular shape to its being indicative of both the "cave of Bethlehem, where Christ was born" and "the cave where He was buried" in Jerusalem.⁷¹ This principle lingered long in Byzantine thought, given that, still in the fifteenth century, the Nativity grotto was indicated as a model for the *prothesis* niche, the place where the Eucharistic bread was prepared in the so-called *proskomidia* rite.⁷²

In Bethlehem, anyway, the material cave and its allegorical double were in many respects complementary. The altar space was to be understood as the final accomplishment of what was initiated in the underground grotto: namely the perpetual reenactment,

68 As reported by Bernhard the Monk in ca. 870: Bernhard the Monk, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, p. 317.

69 Ćurčić 2006.

70 John Chrysostom, *Homily on Blessed Philogonius*, 6, ed. Migne 1856–1866, XLVIII, col. 753b.

71 Germanos of Constantinople, *Historia Mystagogica*, 3, ed. Brightmann 1908, pp. 257–258. Cf. Marinis 2015, pp. 753–754 on the text (available only in partial, non-philological editions) and p. 762 on the Bethlehem symbolism.

72 Symeon of Thessalonike, *On the Holy Church*, 138, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CLV, col. 348.

mediated by the liturgy, of Christ's Incarnation in the Eucharistic bread. Efforts were made to avoid the grotto being left exclusively to individual, uncontrolled forms of piety. Some early sources witness that, at least from time to time, it came to be involved in some liturgical rites: according to the eighth-century *Itinerary of Saint Willibald*, a portable altar was used in such cases, because the place was too tiny to accommodate a fixed one,⁷³ whereas a century later the Latin monk Bernhard claimed that an altar was located in the manger cave.⁷⁴ However, other sources report that an altar, or in any case an altar-like marble structure supported by four columns, was erected above the hole marking the very spot of Christ's birth in the eastern niche.⁷⁵

SITE-BOUND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN A NEW SETTING

The more direct association of the grotto with the liturgy did not discourage the traditional, un-mediated, devotional practices that took place in front of Christ's birthplace. The principle that holy sites were *per se* worthy of veneration became so largely widespread that it was even used as an argument to justify the use of other forms of religious materiality. In his defense of images during the Iconoclastic controversies in the eighth century, John of Damascus described worship for memorial sites associated with Biblical narratives, including "the manger and the cave of Bethlehem", as one of the most important forms of worship: such things were venerated not on account of their specific nature, but because God had chosen to operate through and in them in this earthly world, so that they were transformed into "repositories of divine power".⁷⁶

The Justinianic setting of the Nativity church encouraged pilgrims to penetrate the mystic cave and say their prayers while looking at and kissing the very spots of Christ's birth and the manger. Sophronius described the believer's behavior as a definitely physical

experience: the portion of ground hallowed by contact with the newborn's body was to be touched with one's mouth, eyes, and head in order to obtain spiritual benefits.⁷⁷ It is not clear whether the cave already included a western extension as today or was restricted to its eastern and southern parts. In any case, pilgrims were much impressed by its beauty: old descriptions report that it was lavishly decorated with marble revetments as well as golden and silver ornaments.⁷⁸ The improved access to the grotto suited the pilgrims' wish to more directly appropriate the supernatural *dynamis* associated with the site. This desire was accomplished not only by looking at, touching and kissing the venerable spots associated with the Gospel narratives, but also by scraping some earth or cutting off fragments of rock, which could be safely transported back home, mixed with water and included within small clay flasks known as *eulogiae* ("blessings").⁷⁹ In this way, pilgrims could convince themselves that at least part of the site-specific sanctity of the holy cave could be delocalized to far-away regions, without losing its miraculous properties.

An important development of this age was the expansion of the local network of holy sites. The cave of the Holy Innocents was still mostly located in the south grottoes.⁸⁰ Some more spots associated with the story of the Magi were identified in other parts of the basilica: it is possible that the marble table seen by Hyacinth in the north transept and awkwardly identified in his travelogue as that used for the Last Supper was actually the table which later pilgrims,

73 Hugeburc, *Life of Saint Willibald*, 22, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, pp. 266–267.

74 Bernhard the Monk, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, I, p. 317.

75 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

76 John of Damascus, *Third Oration on Holy Images*, 34, ed. Kotter 1975, pp. 139–140.

77 Sophronius, *Anacreontics*, 19, ed. Migne 1856–1866, LXXXVII/3, cols 3812–3813.

78 Epiphanius of Constantinople, ed. Donner 1971, pp. 70–71.

79 Bagatti 1949, pp. 142–143; Vikan 2010, pp. 36–40.

80 See the clear hint at them in the tenth-century *Life of Saints Constantine and Helena*, as excerpted in Baldi 1955, pp. 106–107.

from the early twelfth century onward, describe as the place where Mary laid some refreshments for her visitors from the East.⁸¹

More meaningfully, the exact spot where, according to Matthew (2, 9), the star of the Magi had stopped to reveal the Lord's dwelling was located immediately to the north east of the cave, between the conch and the outer, circular wall of the raised podium. This corresponded to a deep, almost square-shaped cistern adjoining the eastern wall of the Nativity cave. The promotion of this new cultic attraction was important, first of all, because it introduced water into the pilgrims' experience of the holy place. This element was invested with an evident maternal symbolism and resounded also with Biblical associations. One could be reminded of the water from a well located close to Bethlehem's town walls from which, according to 2 Sam 23, 15, David had longed to drink. When three Israelite warriors, after breaking the Philistine lines, drew and brought this water to him, the King of Israel interpreted this as a divine sign and decided to use the liquid as an offering to God. In later times, starting in the twelfth century, efforts were also made to locate this well in the church courtyard, on the road to the Shepherds' Field and much later in the ruins of a Byzantine monastery and cemetery known today as "King David's wells" on Manger street.⁸² Occasionally, David's well came to be associated with the cistern in the north transept, as witnessed by Daniel the Higoumen in the early twelfth century.⁸³ Nevertheless, the latter was praised not only for its memorial qualities, as it was more commonly identified as the well whence Mary drew water during her stay in the cave, but also as a most venerable spot, since it was perceived as the stage for a sort of customary miracle. The earliest mention of this is found around 590 in Gregory of Tours' hagiographic work, *De gloria martyrum*, where he reports what he had heard from one of his clerics who had recently been in the Holy Land:

Then, there is a big well in Bethlehem, whence, as they say, the glorious Mary drew water. There is often shown a big miracle to beholders: i.e. the star that appeared to the Magi is displayed to the pure in heart. Those believers who come and lean down from the mouth of the well have their heads covered with a cloth. Then the one who has become worthy of this can see the star floating over water from one wall of the well to another, in the same way as stars going through the vault of heaven. And albeit many glance [at the water], it is seen only by those whose mind is sounder. I have seen some people claiming to have seen it. Recently, also our deacon reported that he had watched [the well] in the company of five men and that it had appeared to only two of them.⁸⁴

The site-experience was undoubtedly one of the most stupefying for Holy Land pilgrims. The contemplation of the well was something more than an ordinary act of meditation and commemoration, given that the star was credited with being physically present in the water, as a sort of material relic. Interestingly, Gregory's text and more specifically his hint at the habit of covering heads with cloths seems to indicate that a sort of ritualized approach to the site was established. It is hardly surprising that it was regularly mentioned by subsequent pilgrims and that their travelogues, starting with that of Epiphanius of Constantinople (ca. 800), make sure to indicate its exact location. The 1934 excavations brought to light the circular foundations of the well **PLAN III**: given that the latter's dimensions very closely correspond to those of the octagonal stone structure now located

81 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205. On the table of refreshments cf. Bagatti 1952, pp. 14–15; Kopp 1959, p. 72.

82 Tobler 1849, pp. 10–15; Bagatti 1952, pp. 248–255; Bagatti/Alliata 1980; Petrozzi 1985, pp. 143–146; Külzer 1994, p. 148.

83 Bacci forthcoming.

84 Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, chap. 1, ed. Krusch 1885, II/2, p. 38. On the dating cf. Shaw 2016.



22 | Baptismal font in the south nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 6th century

in the southern aisle (FIG. 22), it has been assumed that it may have originally served as well-head. This would explain why Gregory speaks of beholders “leaning down” to peer through the well-mouth⁸⁵ and would also fit Hyacinth’s description of the well being delimited by walls connected to the chancel barrier:

As we went down from the choir, on the left of the stairs by which we went down is one wall of a well (and another one is joined to the choir-screen): over this well the star stood which led the Magi from the east.⁸⁶

The structure is otherwise interpreted as a baptismal font: it is internally four-lobed and, on the exterior, it bears a Greek votive inscription included within a *tabula ansata* (reading “For remembrance, rest, and remission of sins of those whose names the Lord knows”). Both the epigraphic characteristics and the overall shape point to a sixth-century dating: if this structure was not meant to be erected in the apse, its original location can be supposed either above one of the three cisterns of the ancient atrium or in a room

adjoining the north side of the narthex.⁸⁷ Its interpretation as a font is hampered, anyway, by the absence of steps inside it.

The integration of water into the cultic attractions of Bethlehem continued with yet another holy site that was mentioned for the first time in the Irish monk Adamnán of Iona’s *De locis sanctis*, probably dating from the 680s.⁸⁸ The text informs its readers that the water used to wash the new-born Jesus immediately after his birth was poured away from the summit of a rock and came to fill a sort of natural cavity located underneath. The liquid, hallowed by contact with the Son of God’s body, was said to be still preserved without impurities or diminishment in that very place, located “outside the wall” – an expression hinting probably at a location on the exterior of the Nativity cave.⁸⁹ Since the nineteenth century, the holy site was rediscovered and identified with an underground cavity located below the east apse (PLAN I.14). It could be accessed through a door opened directly into the masonry of the apse wall: in its center, it housed a small basin (FIG. 23) and its walls were covered with many Greek graffiti left by its ancient visitors.⁹⁰ The development of this cult phenomenon is all the more surprising: unlike other holy spots, it cannot be viewed as the material transcription of details provided by textual authorities, given that Jesus’ first bath is never mentioned, not even in apocryphal narratives. Latin theological tradition, which relied on Jerome’s arguments against the heretic Helpidius, went even so far as to rule out that Christ may have needed to be washed, given that he was thought

85 Richmond 1938, p. 71, goes so far as to imagine that the baptismal rites took place in the well of the star, which would be illogical. Hamilton 1947, pp. 81–82, proposed to view this structure as originally framing the holy site.

86 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205; quotation after his English translation on p. 123.

87 Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 35, 98, 198; Vincent 1936, p. 572; Bagatti 1952, pp. 49–50.

88 As demonstrated by O’Loughlin 2007, pp. 6, 42–64.

89 Adamnán of Iona, *De locis sanctis*, ed. Bieler 1965, pp. 207–208. Cf. also Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205, whose incorrect wording seems to indicate a holy site “close to the church”.

90 Bagatti 1952, pp. 151–156; Petrozzi 1985, pp. 102–103.

to be born clean, with no stains of either blood or placenta. The detail of Jesus' bath, on the contrary, appeared in Byzantine images of the Nativity in approximately the same period (seventh and eighth centuries): it is not clear whether the diffusion of the latter encouraged the promotion of the holy site, or vice versa. Perhaps both relied on oral traditions already circulating in the Palestinian area.⁹¹

VISUAL MARKERS IN THE CHURCH DECORUM

Pilgrims were accustomed to wash their faces with the water of the bath grotto in order to obtain a very special blessing, as stated by Adamnán. Water was also easy to transport back home within small clay ampullae. These and the other tokens that pilgrims brought back from the Holy Land were frequently embellished with rather roughly sketched representations of the Gospel events commemorated in the *loca sancta*. This "souvenir art", mostly dating from the sixth and seventh centuries, was often viewed by art historians as one of the channels through which the main schemes of religious narrative iconography came to be disseminated throughout the Christian world. Not infrequently, the images embellishing *eulogiae* and other similar objects in different media (including metalworks and ivories) were also supposed to summarily replicate some now vanished monumental images displayed in the churches marking the holy sites.⁹² In some cases, they made use of standard compositions that also included visual hints at some characteristic features of the furnishing and setting of the worshipped site. A number of works displaying the Nativity scene and deemed to originate from Bethlehem stood out for their conflation of different topographic indicators of the Justinianic building: the recurrent presence of a metal grille may have been reminiscent of the sanctuary enclosure, whereas the representation of the manger as an altar with a *fenestella* on the front side and of lamps



23 | The bath grotto, Nativity church, Bethlehem

hanging from arcaded buildings may have been evocative of the close connection of sanctuary and cave.⁹³

Nevertheless, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which such objects may have really taken inspiration from a material image. This is for two basic reasons. First, the compositions used in *eulogiae* and ancient souvenirs are hardly identical: some of them are more narrative in character, whereas others privilege an almost iconic rendering of the sacred event, displaying the Virgin and Child enthroned, in frontal or profile pose, and flanked by the Magi and/or the Shepherds who pay homage to them. Secondly, we are scarcely informed about the presence of figurative ornaments in the Nativity church. Around the year 800, the pilgrim-monk Epiphanius of Constantinople wrote that both the main cave and the site of the manger were decorated with gold and paintings that, apparently, displayed the corresponding events "in the way they had happened".⁹⁴ Even if the wording is somewhat ambiguous,

91 Bacci forthcoming. Cf. also O'Loughlin 2007, pp. 231–232.

92 See especially Grabar 1958; Weitzmann 1974; Kitzinger 1988; Vikan 2010.

93 Weitzmann 1974, pp. 36–39.

94 Epiphanius of Constantinople, ed. Donner 1971, p. 71.

it can be assumed that images of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi were set on display close to the worshipped spots, so that viewers could be enabled to immediately acknowledge the proper location of the manger and Christ's birthplace. In its turn, the existence of mosaics in the upper church, and more specifically in the south transept, is implied by Hyacinth the Presbyter's statement about the three tribunes being "wonderfully decorated with gold and gems"⁹⁵ and is further witnessed, as we will see below, by Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria in 938.⁹⁶

Another hint at mosaic decorations is found in a story that was used as argument against the Iconoclasts in an anonymous ninth-century treatise on the legitimacy of images, the *Letter of the Patriarchs of the East to Emperor Theophilus*. This apologetic work was accompanied by a dossier of textual excerpts, taken from different sources and bearing witness to the ancient roots of Christian figurative tradition. The passage about Bethlehem is not found in any further text and it is therefore not clear if it was really quoted from an earlier source or was written in the ninth century in a fully autonomous way: in any case, it is possible that it relied, in some way, on earlier, perhaps oral traditions. The scene was set in the times of the early seventh-century Greek-Persian wars and more specifically in those days of 614 when the army of King Khusraw II, in 614, ravaged the Holy Land, laid harm to the most important holy sites and appropriated the most venerated Christian relic, the wood of the Holy Cross. Even if no mention was made of this in earlier narratives about the basilica, the anonymous author claimed that Saint Helena had much engaged in embellishing her foundations with monumental images. One such was set on display on the façade of the Nativity church:

There she built a very great church in honor of the Mother of God, and on the outer wall on the west side she depicted

in artistic mosaics the holy birth of Christ, the Mother of God holding the life-bringing infant at her breast, and the adoration of the gift-bearing Magi.⁹⁷

This text is interesting from different viewpoints. First of all, it bears witness to the dedication of the basilica to the Virgin Mary, which is mentioned in the pilgrims' accounts from the seventh century onwards.⁹⁸ Secondly, the description of the façade mosaics seems to evoke two basic compositional schemes diffused in souvenir art: namely a narrative one, focusing on the Nativity event, and a more iconic one, displaying the enthroned Virgin Mary and Child in frontal pose between the symmetrically arranged figures of the Magi and the Shepherds. The latter type occurs frequently in sixth-century artworks associated with Palestine, such as an ampulla in the treasury of Monza Cathedral (FIG. 24)⁹⁹ or an ivory plaque now in the British Museum.¹⁰⁰ Alternative versions, also occurring in Palestinian *eulogiae*, displayed the Virgin in profile, facing the Wise Men of the East.¹⁰¹ The co-existence of different schemes may be considered to be associated with different images put on display in the church: it can be assumed that the narrative images were more directly associated with the cave, whereas the iconic type, reproduced on the façade, may have been originally represented also in the conch of the main apse.

95 Hyacinth, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205: "In capite ecclesie tres habentur tribune; aurum et gemmis mirabiliter sunt ornate."

96 Eutychius, *Annals*, ed. Breydy, p. 120.

97 *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, 7.8, ed. Munitiz/Chrysostomides/Harvalia-Crook/ Dendrinos 1997, p. 43 (Greek text) and p. 42 (English translation as quoted in the text). Cf. also the slightly different versions on pp. 26, 146.

98 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 132.

99 Grabar 1958, pp. 16–17; Vikar 2010, p. 40; Krueger 2014, p. 78.

100 Eastmond 2000.

101 Rahmani 1979.



24 | The Mother of God between the Magi and the Shepherds, clay eulogia, Treasury of Monza Cathedral, 6th century

The Magi's Persian identity was efficaciously revealed in all types of tokens by their prominent Phrygian huts. According to the *Letter of the Patriarchs*, Khusraw II's soldiers decided to spare the church from destruction when they recognized this same iconographic detail in the façade mosaic:

Then [after burning the holy sites in Jerusalem] they came to the holy city of Bethlehem. And when they gazed at the pictures of their compatriots the Persian astrologer-Magi, they stood in awe before their picture as if these were still alive, and out of reverence and love for their forefathers they preserved this great church intact and completely unharmed for their sake. Being won over by those who seemed to them to be still alive and seeing, they bestowed the church on them. For this reason alone, this ancient house of prayer has survived until today.¹⁰²

The apologetic intent of this story is evident: if images were respected even by the terrible Persian army, how could the Iconoclasts hate and forbid them? Their description is nonetheless consistent with the two different types of images associated with Bethlehem in contemporary *eulogiae* and it cannot therefore be ruled out that the tradition originated in Palestine and was circulated by Holy Land pilgrims. The only possible location for the mosaics was on the upper portion of the façade wall between the tympanum and the narthex, which was presumably visible from the road on the top of the hill to the west of the basilica's forecourts. Indeed, the likelihood of the story is corroborated by the lack of textual or archaeological evidence about any damage caused to the church during the Persian invasion of 614.

102 *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, 7.8, ed. Munitiz/Chrysostomides/Harvalia-Crook/ Dendrinis 1997, p. 43 (Greek text) and p. 42 (English translation as quoted in the text).

The unblemished appearance of the building probably contributed to its renown as a place especially dear to God, which could be easily contrasted with the violent devastations undergone by the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This aura was probably reinforced some years later, in 636–638, when the troops of Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb conquered Palestine and introduced Islam into the region.¹⁰³ Even if sources are basically of later date and often contradictory, they indicate that no harm was done by the invaders to the most eminent Christian *loca sancta*. The symbolic appropriation of the land implied the Islamization of what had been an empty space in Byzantine Jerusalem: namely the ancient Temple Mount, viewed by the newcomers and their descendants in the course of time as the First Prayer-direction, the site of the Last Judgment, and the furthest mosque (*al-Aqsa*) where Muhammad, according to the Qur’an (17, 1) had been transported and whence the Prophet’s night journey to heaven had started.¹⁰⁴ The story of the Caliph’s visit to the Jerusalem esplanade in the company of Patriarch Sophronius and the rediscovery of the rock of the ancient Jewish Temple was very often repeated, commented on, and enriched with details in *hadith* literature, collections of ancient traditions, and treatises on the merits of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵

In his *Annals*, Eutychius of Alexandria made use and gave his own version of such a narrative and combined it with a specific hint at the contemporary vicissitudes of the Nativity church.¹⁰⁶ According to this variant, ‘Umar was first guided by Sophronius to the Holy Sepulchre, where he resolutely refused to pray: had he done so, explained the Caliph, his successors would have later laid claim to the site, which would have been turned into a mosque. In fact, he decided to pray on the flight of steps on the east side

of the church atrium, so that everybody may understand that he respected the burial site of the second-last prophet of Islam and, at the same time, he did not share the associationist Christians’ belief in his Resurrection and status as the Son of God. Then he moved with the Patriarch to the Temple Mount and, immediately later, to Bethlehem. Most interestingly, he behaved there in a definitely different manner:

Then ‘Umar went and visited Bethlehem, and when time for prayer came, he prayed in the interior of the church, near the south conch. The conch was thoroughly covered with mosaics. Then ‘Umar wrote for the Patriarch a sealed paper, according to which the Muslims were allowed to pray in that place only one by one. Also, no collective meeting could take place there for prayer, no claim to this could be laid, and no change was possible.¹⁰⁷

This story is indicative of a much different and multi-faceted attitude of Islam – or at least some distinctive currents within Islam – vis-à-vis the place of Jesus’ birth. This episode was given a special prominence in the Qur’an, where the Surah 19 is entirely devoted to Mary and her virginal delivery taking place “in a distant place” under a palm tree: as a divine sign, a stream appeared to satisfy her thirst and the palm provided her with fresh dates (19, 22–26). The identification of this “remote” place with Bethlehem, already present in the eighth-century work of Ibn Iṣāq,

103 On the Muslim conquest, see Gil 1997, pp. 11–74.

104 See especially Kaplony 2002; Grabar 2006; Kaplony 2009. Cf. also the excellent survey by Küchler 2007, pp. 146–149.

105 Busse 1987, pp. 25–26; Gil 1997, pp. 65–74, 90–104, for extant sources. In general on such traditions, cf. Hirschberg 1951–1952; Kister 1969; Hasson 1996; Livne-Kafri 1998; Hillenbrand 2016.

106 On Eutychius’ sources, especially the collection of ‘Uthman b. Salih, cf. Breydy 1983, pp. 1–3, 13, 23–24. Cf. also Bashear 1991, pp. 275–276.

107 Eutychius, *Annals*, ed. Breydy, p. 120.

was largely accepted, even if alternative locations were sometimes proposed: in fact, the village could be easily understood as being distant from Jerusalem, and more specifically, from the south-eastern edge of the Haram eš-Šarif – the ancient Temple esplanade – where many exegetes located the site of the Annunciation and Conception of Jesus, described as the “eastern corner of the house” in the Qur’an (19, 16–17).¹⁰⁸

Early traditions bear witness to the relatively widespread worship for the site in the early Islamic period. According to one *ḥadīth* attributed to Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (d. 749), ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, one of Muhammad’s companions, was accustomed to visit the Nativity church and make gifts of oil for its lamps.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, another tradition widespread in the area before the end of the eighth century, and traced back to sayings of other companions of the Prophet, reinforced the association of Bethlehem with Islam by describing it as one of the several places that Muhammad visited during his night journey to Jerusalem, and where he performed two *rak’a* (prostrations).¹¹⁰ In the tenth century, as witnessed by the historians al-Maqdisi and al-Istakhri, Muslim believers reported that the palm mentioned in the Qur’an was still partly preserved in the Nativity cave. The basilica, in its turn, was much praised for its beauty and solemnity.¹¹¹

In Eutychius’ narrative, ‘Umar’s respect for Christian holy places was indicative of what modern historians are accustomed to label “‘Umar’s covenant”, namely the mutual recognition of rights by the Jerusalem church and the early Islamic government in Palestine.¹¹² Indeed, Umayyad rule is known to have been a flourishing period in both economic and cultural terms: archaeological evidence indicates that the largest part of the population was Christian; ecclesiastical life continued to develop; agriculture was improved thanks to the introduction of new irrigation systems; and a number of new ecclesiastical buildings were erected and decorated.¹¹³ Moreover,

it is known that the habit of praying within Christian churches was far from unusual, at least until specific buildings for Muslim worship were erected and disseminated throughout the land.¹¹⁴ The Patriarch of Alexandria undoubtedly tended to mythicize this early period and contrast it with the times of ‘Abbasid rule in Syria and Palestine, when the Islamic attitude towards Christian holy sites and church properties had become more aggressive. He lamented namely that, notwithstanding ‘Umar’s prohibition, a mosque in his name had been constructed in the immediate vicinity of the Jerusalem Holy Sepulchre.¹¹⁵ In its turn, an important part of the Nativity church in Bethlehem, namely its south transept that was oriented toward Mecca, had been appropriated by the Moslems to be used as their own place of prayer:

In our times the Muslims went against the sealed document of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. They erased the mosaics of the conch and instead of them they wrote there what they liked. There they started to gather and summon up the people for prayer.¹¹⁶

Eutychius’ words are unambiguous: the south transept had been by then deprived of its ancient decoration to make it fit for a use as *masjid* or place of prayer.¹¹⁷ The mention of Muslim believers being summoned up seems to imply that the people gathered

¹⁰⁸ Busse 1966, pp. 122–123; Bashear 1991, p. 275; Elad 1995, pp. 93–97.

¹⁰⁹ Bashear 1991, p. 277.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 273; Grabar 2006, pp. 117–118.

¹¹¹ Texts excerpted in Baldi 1955, p. 106; English translation in Le Strange 1890, p. 298.

¹¹² Wolińska-Filipczak 2015, pp. 227–229.

¹¹³ Piccirillo 2002b, pp. 219–253; Habas 2008; Avni 2014.

¹¹⁴ Bashear 1991, pp. 277–278; Busse 1993, p. 74.

¹¹⁵ Busse 1993, who assumes that the Mosque of ‘Umar in Jerusalem was constructed – or reconstructed – at some time in the ninth or tenth century.

¹¹⁶ Eutychius, *Annals*, ed. Breydy, p. 120. Breydy assumes (*ibidem*, n. 23) that the expression “in our times” may refer to the epoch of Eutychius’ alleged source, but it fits much more the historical circumstances of the mid-tenth century.

¹¹⁷ Piccirillo 1995, pp. 52–53.

in the church for the daily prayers after hearing the muezzin's recall, even if it seems much more probable that the site was essentially associated with pilgrimage, rather than with everyday religious life. Some hints in later, twelfth and thirteenth century sources, show that the story about 'Umar's engagement was known to Islamic authors: the wandering dervish al-Harawī, in 1173, described the south conch as the "Mihrāb of Caliph 'Umar"¹¹⁸ and in the following century Ya'qut provided a rather elaborate version of the old event in the following terms:

When Caliph 'Umar came to Jerusalem, a monk of Bait Lahm approached him and said: "I would obtain mercy of you for Bait Lahm". 'Umar said: "I know nothing of the place, but would fain see it". When 'Umar came there, he said to the people: "You shall have mercy and safe conduct, but it is incumbent upon us that in every place where there are Christians we should erect a mosque". The monk answered: "There is in Bait Lahm an arched building, which is built so as to be turned towards your Qibla; take this, therefore, and make of it a mosque for the Muslims, and do not destroy the church". So 'Umar spared the church, saying his prayer in that arched building, and made of it a mosque, laying on the Christians the service of lighting it with lamps and keeping the building clean and in repair. The Muslims never ceased to visit Bait Lahm and go to this arched building – which is the one made by 'Umar – to make their prayers therein, one generation after the other.¹¹⁹

The importance of such textual evidence has been mostly underestimated. First of all, it unequivocally bears witness to the presence of mosaics in the interior decoration of the sixth-century church: if mosaics were displayed in the south conch, it is safe to imagine that they also extended to the east and south apses and perhaps also to other walls. Secondly, it can be inferred that the Muslims decided to remove and substitute them with monumental Cufic

inscriptions because they displayed some religious imagery. In the tenth century, several persons of learning had started warning Muslim believers against the practice of saying prayers within Christian churches: many authors pointed out that such places were impure because of their decoration with images. A Shi'a tradition attributed to the fifth imām, al-Bāqir (d. 731), stated that prayer could be allowed if pictures were standing on the right, left, behind or under one's legs, whereas it was prohibited if images were displayed on the *qibla* wall: in such cases, they should have at least been covered with a veil.¹²⁰ In keeping with such developments, the refurbishment of the south transept was meant to provide the space reserved for Islamic prayer with a convenient setting.

In this respect, Eutychius' mention of the inscriptions displayed in the conch is most meaningful. As it is unlikely that the space reserved for Islamic prayer may have looked less rich in ornaments than the rest of the church, it can be supposed that the redecoration consisted in non-figurative mosaics, where visual prominence was given to writing, undoubtedly displayed in elegant calligraphic forms, instead of images. There were certainly quotes from the Qur'an, presumably verses from the nineteenth Surah describing the birth of Jesus, but also possibly other passages underscoring the superior role of Islam as final accomplishment of God's alliance with mankind.¹²¹ In front of this setting, viewers were reminded of decorations used in the most important Islamic sanctuaries, especially those of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which had been embellished in 691 on the initiative of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) with both monumental inscriptions

118 Abu'l-Hasan 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Guide to the Pilgrimage Sites*, transl. Sourdell-Thomine 1957, p. 70.

119 I have slightly altered the English translation by Le Strange 1890, p. 300.

120 Bashear 1991, pp. 278–281, sp. p. 280 on al-Bāqir's statement.

121 On the importance of monumental inscriptions in Islamic religious architecture cf. especially Cruikshank Dodd/Khairallah 1981; Blair 1998.

and lavish ornaments combining vegetal, jewel-like, and animal motifs. On account of its status as a most important holy site in Islamic tradition, the repertory of forms associated with this latter monument was constantly regarded as a source of inspiration in the ornamentation of prominent religious sites in the Holy Land and Syria: even if it is not clear whether a Palestinian school of mosaicists flourished in the post-Umayyad period, some activity continued especially in order to assure periodical repairs to the existing mosaics.¹²² The lost program in Bethlehem can be regarded, in this respect, as an important, albeit indirect witness to the enduring use of the mosaic medium as a visual indicator of the distinctive status attributed to the most venerable holy sites.

THE MYTH OF BETHLEHEM IN THE LATIN WEST

There is scant information about the development of religious life in Bethlehem in the early Islamic period. In 808, the report of a Frankish mission to the Holy Land made on the initiative of Charlemagne, states that the area of Bethlehem was frequently victim to robberies on the part of Bedouins. In any case, the church was run by fifteen people, including monks, priests, and other ecclesiastics: most curiously, mention was made also of two stylites who lived on the top on columns in the vicinity of the church.¹²³ Possibly, such columns belonged to some parts of the old atrium or the external forecourt that had collapsed in the meantime, or perhaps the text hints at the ruins of the old *Kathisma* church, where the presence of stylites is recorded in the early twelfth century.¹²⁴ Charlemagne's *missi dominici* took extremely accurate measurements of the basilica as well as of other monuments of the Holy Land, and this may indicate that the Frankish Emperor was interested in promoting architectural repairs: whether the latter ever took place is nevertheless unknown.¹²⁵

Undoubtedly, worship of the Bethlehem site was by then popular in Western Christianity. The church was frequently described in Latin pilgrims' travelogues and some efforts were made to promote new cultic phenomena replicating or evoking in some way the site of Christ's birth. The most important attempt concerned the earliest and most important Marian church in Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore, which came to be known since the seventh century as "Sancta Maria *ad praesepe*". Since the first witness of this title dates back to the times of the Jerusalemite Pope Theodore I (642–649), it has been assumed that, as a reaction to the Islamic conquest of the Holy Land, he may have promoted the construction of a sort of surrogate cave, where the relic of the manger was put on display. Indeed, the public worship for the Roman "oratory of the crib" is first documented in the first half of the eighth century, and developed in the following centuries: in 1291, it was given a new setting under Pope Nicholas IV and the sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio was asked to visualize the holy event in a sculptural group. Shortly thereafter, the association with Bethlehem was reinforced by new claims about the location of Saint Jerome's sepulcher close to the ersatz grotto.¹²⁶

Also the dedication to Bethlehem of the Benedictine abbey at Ferrières-sur-Gâtinais, in the French diocese of Sens, in 636 is indicative of the Western interest in the holy sites of Palestine.¹²⁷ Probably the evocation of Christ's birthplace was basically liturgical in this case and did not imply any topomimetical attempt

¹²² Flood 1997, pp. 69–71; Concina/Flores David/Guidetti 2011, pp. 200–201.

¹²³ *Memoria de illis monasteriis quae sunt in extremis Hierusalem in terra promissionis*, ed. McCormick 2011, p. 208.

¹²⁴ Daniel the Higoimen, ed. Venevitinov/Seemann 1970, pp. 63–66.

¹²⁵ McCormick 2011, pp. 94–116.

¹²⁶ Liverani 1854; De Blauuw 1996, I, pp. 400–401; Saxer 2001, pp. 100–104; Kinney 2011; Aceto 2015.

¹²⁷ Hubert 1934; Gand 1998.

at reproducing the spatial setting of the cave or the basilica, even if some scholars interpreted the octagonal altar space of the abbey church of Saint-Pierre as a possible Gothic reshaping of an earlier Merovingian structure replicating the Constantinian octagon, which, however, was by then no longer extant.¹²⁸ The connection with the Nativity cave was much more explicit in the abbey church of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, in the northern Pyrenees, where abbot Oliba, in the early eleventh century, built up a western annex including an upper chapel in honor of the Holy Trinity and a circular crypt devoted to “Our Lady of the Crib” **FIG. 25**: the latter was meant to house some relics of the Virgin’s garments which Oliba had obtained in Milan in 1011 and its shape was therefore meant generically to evoke that of a grotto. It is very possible, in any case, that the main source of inspiration was Santa Maria Maggiore, rather than Bethlehem.¹²⁹

According to a hypothesis which has gained some acceptance in scholarship, the diffusion of monumental churches with triconch-ending from the eleventh century onward in Western Europe may be connected with a specific wish to imitate one of the most distinctive features in the plan of the Nativity basilica. Such a connection was evoked with regard to Sankt Maria im Kapitol in Cologne, consecrated in the year 1049, on the assumption that the dimensions of the triconch, notwithstanding some evident differences, corresponded rather closely to those of the Bethlehem one.¹³⁰ It was therefore assumed that the church may have been built up according to measurements made *in situ*, as happened in 1036 with Bishop Meinwerk’s Busdorfkirche in Paderborn, which was said to exactly correspond to the measurements of the Holy Sepulchre, taken in Jerusalem by Wino of Helmarshausen.¹³¹ Nevertheless, apart from the dedication of the church altar to the Virgin Mary (and the Holy Cross), no clear indication of a specific cultic association with Bethlehem is to be found in ancient sources,



25 | Underground Chapel of Our Lady of the Crib, Abbey church of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, 11th century

and it cannot be ruled out that other triconch-shaped buildings located in Germany or Italy may have been regarded as models.¹³² Also in the case of later churches with similar architectural plans, such as the thirteenth-century Elisabethkirche in Marburg, the available documents do not clearly indicate that they were intentionally conceived as replicas of the Nativity church.¹³³

There is, anyway, a possible exception to this rule. The church of San Sepolcro in Milan owes this dedication to its re-consecration made after the unfortunate Lombard expedition to the Holy Land in 1100: from that period onward it was regarded as a sort of ersatz

¹²⁸ Grabar 1946, I, p. 414. This hypothesis found no wide acceptance in scholarship: cf. Saulnier 1972; Rousseau 1975; Untermann 1989, p. 280, n. 96; Saliger 1998.

¹²⁹ Grabar 1946, I, p. 536; Berliner 1955, p. 164; Uhde-Stahl 1977; Ponsich 1981; Untermann 1989, pp. 81–82; Codina 2005.

¹³⁰ Rathgens 1913, pp. 169–170; Kitschenberg 1988, pp. 20–21; Kitschenberg 1990, pp. 163–167; Schwab 2009.

¹³¹ Brandt 1986; Mietke 1991.

¹³² Untermann 1989, pp. 19–20; Beuckers 2000.

¹³³ Wachsmuth 1930, and Helten 1985, p. 175, who trace back the choice of the triconch-shape to the connections of the Teutonic Order, active in Marburg, with the Holy Land. Cf. the critical remarks by Meyer-Barkhausen 1930.

Holy Sepulchre, which could enable the Milanese to make a surrogate pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Yet, the re-dedication apparently did not imply major restorations and the building kept the shape it had received in the previous century, when it was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, in the year 1030. The church plan is undoubtedly very close to that of the basilica of Bethlehem and its choice may have been instrumental to the memorial functions with which it was invested from its very beginnings: the foundation chart made clear that its founder, a nobleman named Benedict Rozo, erected a cross-shaped church, whose three tribunes of equal size were consciously meant to symbolize the three persons of the Trinity. Accordingly, seven chapels were to be erected within and outside the church interior with dedications associated with the major events of Christ's life, including one "in honor of the Our Lord Jesus Christ's birth and under the denomination of *Betthelem*".¹³⁴ It may be that the Nativity church, as the site of the Incarnation, was intentionally evoked in Milan as a spatial setting intended for the performance of devotions which enabled believers to meditate on and reenact the most important stages in the Son of God's passage on earth.

BETHLEHEM UNDER FATIMID RULE

The renown of the Nativity church increased in the eleventh century when the building was rumored to have been miraculously saved from destruction in the year 1009: Bishop Ralph of Couhé, who came back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1010, informed the monk and chronicler Adémar of Chabannes (d. 1034) that the "Saracens" had just destroyed the most important holy sites of Palestine, including the burial place of Saint George in Lydda and the Jerusalem Holy Sepulchre, whereas in Bethlehem the sudden apparition of a dazzling, supernatural light had dispersed all assailers. Even the Sinai Monastery was defended against the enemy

in an analogous way.¹³⁵ The related events are also known from Arabic sources. Following the disintegration of the 'Abbasid Caliphate in 940, Palestine fell under the influence of the Fatimid rulers of Egypt, but it took several decades of political turmoil before the latter managed to assert their authority over the local population. Caliph al-Hākim (d. 1021) belonged like his predecessors to the Ismaili branch of Shi'a Islam, but unlike them he promoted an aggressive policy against Jews, Christians, and Sunnis. In 1009, he gave orders to set fire to several churches in the Holy Land and beyond: the destruction of the ancient five-aisled basilica of the Constantinian Holy Sepulchre, the so-called *Martyrium*, was the most impressive outcome of this attack.¹³⁶ In the eyes of many, the demolition of the holy site was regarded as materializing the "abomination of desolation" announced by Daniel (9, 27) and Matthew (24, 15): this is probably what the Count of Anjou, Fulcus Nerra, visiting Jerusalem shortly after the destruction, must have thought when he gazed at the church turned into a heap of ruins.¹³⁷

Once again, the unblemished appearance of the Nativity church enhanced its aura as a holy site defended directly by God. Indeed, it is possible that it was spared because of its partial use also as an Islamic place of prayer. In any case, according to the historian Yahya ibn Sa'īd, already in 1020 the newly appointed Patriarch Nicephorus had obtained from al-Hākim an official document granting the immediate cessation of all hostility against the Christians, the renunciation of any future attempt at further destruction, and the restitution of all previous rights concerning the churches and holy sites within and around Jerusalem, including Bethlehem,

¹³⁴ Salvarani 2002; Salvarani 2008, pp. 138–140; Schiavi 2005, *passim* (the foundation chart is edited on pp. 277–279).

¹³⁵ Adémar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, ed. Delisle 1840–1904, x, p. 152.

¹³⁶ Krönung 2010; Kühnel B. 2010.

¹³⁷ Bachrach 1993, pp. 101–102.

as well as the associated possessions and endowments.¹³⁸ It can be wondered whether the status of the basilica was affected by this decision, which apparently restituted full property of all holy sites to the Christians, regardless of their different denominations – as the document seems to imply.

Indeed, when the Persian traveler Nazir-i Khusraw visited and spent a night in Bethlehem in 1047, he made no mention at all of the *masjid* in the south transept and described the church as a purely Christian pilgrimage site, where many visitors from abroad, and especially from the Byzantine empire, constantly gathered and where most solemn rites were performed once a year.¹³⁹ Interestingly enough, although he laid emphasis on the importance of the site for Christian worship, he avoided all hint at its identification as the birthplace of Jesus. On the contrary, he referred back to old Islamic traditions locating some episodes of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' infancy (namely the newborn's miraculous speech from the cradle) in Jerusalem and described a cult-site associated with His birth – or at least with His early days – which was by then worshipped exclusively by Muslims on the south-eastern corner of the Haram eš-Šarif.¹⁴⁰

On the analogy of Bethlehem, the latter was an underground place, known as *Mahd 'Īsa* ("the cradle of Jesus"). It could be accessed via a steep stairway, and in its interior visitors could see a large basin used as *mihrāb* and identified as the cradle whence the newborn had spoken and revealed his mission on earth, according to the Qur'an (19, 27–34). Indeed, the text (v. 27) indicated that Mary (Maryam) had moved back to "her people" after giving birth to Jesus: it was in this new location that Jesus had spoken from the crib. This corroborated the view that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and had later spent his early days on the Temple Mount, where many interpreters, inspired by the apocryphal narratives about the Virgin's infancy, located Mary's residence.

Nevertheless, Nazir-i Khusraw's unhesitating description of the underground *masjid* as the birthplace of Jesus probably bears witness to a contemporary attempt at creating an Islamic alternative to the Bethlehem cave, which could dispense Muslim believers from paying homage to the Christian shrine. What the Persian traveler heard on the esplanade relied on beliefs that had by then become more widespread and could be traced back to the isolated, though authoritative witness of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 750), who had situated the event of Jesus' birth in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, early sources were silent about the existence of a site of worship identified as *Mahd 'Īsa* prior to the eleventh century, when it was first mentioned in Ibn al-Murajjā's list of the merits of the holy city. Rather, emphasis was laid on the *Mihrāb Maryam*, the prayer chamber where Mary, watched by the Temple priest Zechariah, was given food directly by God, an event which had taken place prior to the Annunciation and was narrated in a different Qur'anic passage (3, 35–37).¹⁴¹

In the Crusader period, the Islamic site was appropriated by the Crusaders with the rest of the Temple Mount and transformed into an oratory known as *balneum* or *balneatorium* of Jesus. Accordingly, the marble basin of the former *mihrāb* was interpreted as the basin of the newborn's first bath and the earlier location of the corresponding event in Bethlehem tended to be forgotten. Also a relic of the Virgin's bed started being worshipped there.¹⁴² Nevertheless, the renown of this place was never strong enough to overshadow the much more famous holy site at Bethlehem, which underwent a thorough restoration and received major embellishments in the times of Latin rule in Palestine.

138 Yahya ibn Sa'īd, *Chronicle*, ed. Kratchkovsky/Vasiliev 1997, pp. 438–439.

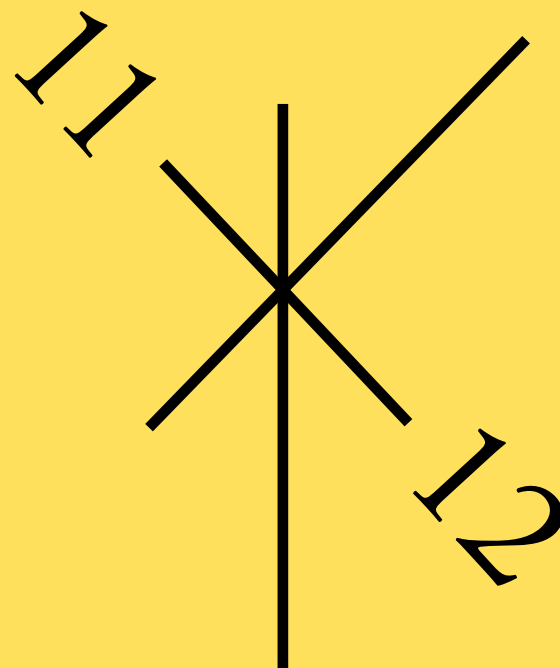
139 Nazir-i Khusraw, *Sefer Namah*, ed. Schefer 1881, p. 99.

140 *Ibidem*, pp. 77–79.

141 Busse 1966, pp. 122–123; Elad 1995, pp. 93–97; Soucek 1998; Matar 2016.

142 Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 310–314; Bacci forthcoming.

Chapter III



The Third *Mise-en-Scène* Under Latin Rule 12th Century

THE CRUSADERS IN BETHLEHEM AND THE LATIN APPROPRIATION OF THE HOLY SITE

Bethlehem fell into the hands of the Frankish army during the night of June 7th, 1099. The small village – probably nothing more than a derelict hamlet¹ – was scarcely important from a strategic viewpoint, but its conquest could reinforce the Crusaders' feeling that they were enjoying God's favor. Along their long path, they had variously manifested their devotion for Christ's birthplace, which was frequently evoked in the oaths pronounced by the expedition leaders. When they decided to go with a small detachment to secure control of the site, Tancred of Hauteville and Baldwin of Bourcq were probably aware that this would have bolstered their soldiers' morale.²

1 So according to Hyacinth's description in the mid-eleventh century, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205.

2 Runciman 1951, I, pp. 277–278.

The conquest was easy: they approached Bethlehem in the full darkness and found that there was no Egyptian garrison to protect it. At first, the local population, composed entirely of Greek- and Arabic-speaking Christians, mistook the Crusaders for a squad of the Fatimid army. It was only at dawn that they realized what had happened and went to meet the newcomers with a solemn and joyful procession, animated by liturgical hymns, aspersions of holy water, and the display of precious crosses and ecclesiastical items. According to Crusader historians, the Franks were welcomed as restorers of Christian worship in Palestine and deliverers of Christians from the Muslim yoke.³ Locals also firmly hoped that Westerners had finally come “to take away the rites of the Gentiles and their impurities from the holy site”.⁴ It can be wondered whether this sentence was meant to hint generically at Islamic presence in the Holy Land, or if it implied a more specific reference to the *masjid* in the south transept of the Nativity church.

But the building faced a much greater danger. Tancred the Norman aroused the criticisms of his comrades-in-arms as he had been arrogant enough as to raise his personal standard over the roof of the building, as if it were an ordinary house. Many in the Crusader army suspected that he considered the holy site as a sort of personal property.⁵ Nevertheless, in a few months the situation radically changed. Jerusalem was conquered on July 14th, 1099, and the new Latin kingdom of Jerusalem was established. It took some time, and many disputes among the knights and between them and the clergy, before the juridical status of the new entity came to be properly defined. Geoffrey of Bouillon's choice not to wear a king's crown on the site where Christ had been crowned with thorns can be read not only as a sign of his deep piety, but also as a symptom of such difficulties. Nevertheless, despite Patriarch Daimbert of Pisa's attempt at asserting the hegemonic role of his church, the following year Geoffrey's successor, Baldwin of Boulogne, managed to obtain an

official coronation as King of Jerusalem. The ceremony took place on December 25th, 1100, in the Nativity church at Bethlehem. This choice was largely an expedient, but it was not thoroughly devoid of symbolic efficaciousness, not only because it invested the sovereign with a Christological parallelism which would have been improper in Jerusalem after Geoffrey of Bouillon's sensational act of humility, but also because it was common knowledge that Bethlehem was the place where David, whose rulership the Crusaders aimed to imitate, had been anointed king of Israel. The building was later used as setting for the coronation rites also by Baldwin II in 1119.⁶

Such developments enhanced the status of the Nativity church. The building was probably perceived from the beginning as equal in dignity to a cathedral church, given that its administration was very soon entrusted to a chapter of regular canons, i.e. an institution typical of the Gregorian reform, consisting of a group of priests who lived together in a monastic manner under a common rule, known as that of Saint Augustine. In 1110, Pope Paschal II accepted Baldwin I's request to raise the holy site to the status of Bishopric, notwithstanding the town's centuries-old dependence on the ecclesiastical see of Ascalon, by then and until 1153 under Muslim rule. The chapter and Bishop of Bethlehem quickly came to be highly influential: the diocese extended as far as Ascalon and was recipient of many gifts of land rents, especially in Western

3 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, v, 44–45, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iv, pp. 461–462; Fulcher of Chartres, *Gesta Francorum Hierusalem peregrinantium*, i, 24, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iii, pp. 354–355.

4 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, v, 45, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iv, p. 462: “ad auferendos Gentilium ritus a loco sancto eorumque immunditias”. Quote after the English translation by Edgington 2013, p. 207.

5 Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum*, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iii, p. 295.

6 Albert of Aachen, *Historia hierosolymitana*, vii, 43, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iv, pp. 536–537; Fulcher of Chartres, *Gesta Francorum Hierusalem peregrinantium*, ii, 7, ed. *Recueil HO 1844–1895*, iii, pp. 554–555; William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, x, 9, and xii, 12, ed. Huygens 1986, pp. 463, 562.



26 | The church tower to the south-east of the fortification walls, Nativity church complex, Bethlehem

Europe.⁷ Some of their income was also associated with the administration of hospices and reception structures for pilgrims in Bethlehem and in other countries: as early as 1147, the chapter owned a hospital at Clamecy, in France, and by 1170 it had obtained another one in the Scottish region of East Lothian.⁸

One of the newcomers' major concerns was the construction of structures that might suit the new liturgical and institutional needs of the site. First of all, the village was a poor hamlet, which the pilgrim Saewulf, in 1102–1103, described as thoroughly derelict and deserted.⁹ Even if the church was in a miraculously unblemished state, it is probable that the ancient forecourt and atrium had suffered considerably from wars and earthquakes. The Crusaders took care to enclose the whole complex within a circuit of high walls, described as newly erected by the Russian pilgrim Daniel, writing between 1108 and 1111.¹⁰ Remnants of it and its central gate-tower giving access to the forecourt were still extant at the end

of the sixteenth century, when they were reproduced in Bernardino Amico's plan [PLAN V]. Some of them were later incorporated into the walls of the present-day Armenian monastery, the south extension of which corresponds fairly well to the medieval situation.¹¹ The south-eastern corner of the fortification included a massive tower which could be used as hideout for the clergy in times of danger and perhaps also as a keep for the church's most precious items [FIG. 26]. It is also possible that the tower was originally connected with the Bishop's residence, the exact location of which cannot be determined because of lack of archaeological investigations in this area.¹²

At least some parts of Justinian's atrium were still standing, even if they underwent some alterations. This holds true especially for the vaulted room, constructed on the south-eastern corner of the ancient structure: known in later times as the "school" or "library of Saint Jerome" and now incorporated into the Armenian monastery [FIG. 15], it was used in the sixteenth century as a stable and may have originally been intended as a hospital for pilgrims.¹³ A residence for the regular canons was erected north of the Nativity church. It consisted of several rooms, including a refectory and a small chapel, adjoining to the north transept, the dedication of which to Saint Catherine is known from the fifteenth century onward [FIG. 67]. The far more eminent building in this complex was its quadrangular cloister with a central court and a probably groin-vaulted ambulatory, each side of which included four pointed-arched bays and arched

7 Riant 1889–1896, I, pp. 11–12; Mayer 1977, pp. 44–80; Hamilton 1980, p. 59; Tessera 2010, pp. 100–102.

8 MacQuarrie 1982, pp. 336–340; Richard 1982, pp. 93–95.

9 Saewulf [1102–1103], ed. Huygens 1994, p. 71.

10 Daniel the Higoumen, ed. Venevitinov/Seemann 1970, p. 63.

11 Hamilton 1934, p. 5; Hamilton 1947, pp. 46–47; Vincent 1937, p. 116; Bagatti 1952, pp. 228–230; Pringle 1993–2009, I, pp. 153–154.

12 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 181; Hamilton 1947, p. 84; Bagatti 1952, pp. 226–227; Pringle 1993–2009, I, pp. 150–152.

13 Hamilton 1947, pp. 98–100; Bagatti 1952, pp. 227–228; Pringle 1993–2009, I, pp. 152–153.

openings supported by paired columns.¹⁴ Some of the latter are still preserved in relatively good condition and display elegantly carved capitals (FIG. 27), partly inspired by ancient models, and partly reminiscent of twelfth-century Romanesque sculpture – the best *comparanda* being provided by some Provençal works.¹⁵

Some alterations concerned also the basilica itself. They did not imply structural alterations and were basically intended to make the building fit for its new function as a church meant for the Latin rite and as a representation space for the kings of Jerusalem. One of the distinctive and most innovative traits of contemporary Western worship was the use of bells not only to gather believers for the Mass, but also to signal a danger or mark the hours. The façade was accordingly provided with two bell towers on the model of North European Romanesque churches and its upper part was altered with the construction of reinforcing walls.¹⁶ It has been assumed that the side entrances were walled up in this period, whereas the sixth-century main door was replaced with a lower, pointed-arched one (FIG. 2).¹⁷ Possibly, this was an outcome of the general restoration of the narthex, the original timber roof of which was replaced with groin vaults.¹⁸ Another intervention concerned the walls of the central nave, the height of which was considerably raised, as revealed by the archaeometric investigations made in 2010.¹⁹

Alterations were also made in the sanctuary area, which was made fit for the performance of the Latin rite. Its appearance is best described by a famous fourteenth-century pilgrim, Niccolò da Poggibonsi, in 1346:

At the end of the columns there is the choir of the main altar, which was apparently very big. It is surrounded by a wall and has three entrances: from the east, from the south and from the north. The stalls of the choir are damaged. In front of the choir is a door, beyond which stands the altar...²⁰



27 | Figurative capital in the medieval cloister, Franciscan convent, Bethlehem, mid-12th century

The text indicates that the sixth-century platform was transformed into an enclosed choir, where the canons sat during the liturgy. The floor was paved with white marble slabs and was encircled by a choir screen.²¹ The altar, which according to earlier sources was located directly above the cave, was moved further east and separated from the choir through a stone or marble barrier.²² This implied the making of a new, uninterrupted and raised floor between the end of the central nave and the altar space, which is known to have been slightly higher than the choir and made

14 Vincent 1937, pp. 117–121; Bagatti 1952, pp. 185–224; Pringle 1993–2009, pp. 149–150.

15 Bagatti 1952, pp. 201–206; Borg 1982, p. 103; Buschhausen 1978, p. 249; Folda 1995, p. 266.

16 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 98; Bagatti 1952, pp. 69–72; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 140; Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012, p. 22.

17 Bagatti 1952, p. 23; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 140. Cf. Hamilton 1947, p. 47, who privileged a dating in the thirteenth century.

18 Vincent 1937, p. 116; Hamilton 1947, p. 47.

19 Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012, p. 14, 20, 22, 25.

20 Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'Oltremare*, 95, ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 81.

21 As clearly witnessed in 1512 by the Greek pilgrim Arsenios, Προσκυνητάριον, ed. Mavrommates/Arvanitakes 1899, pp. 485–490. Cf. Bacci 2015, p. 44.

22 The setting of the choir and altar space is clearly reproduced in the plans by Amico 1609, pls 1, 3; Beauveau 1619, p. 145; Quaresmi 1639, II, pl. between pp. 676–677. Cf. Abel 1918, pp. 552–555.

accessible via a flight of steps.²³ As implied by the Greek pilgrim John Phokas, who visited the Holy Land in either 1177 or 1195, the main altar was located within a marble, vaulted baldachin.²⁴

The rearrangement of this area led also to the demolition of the synthronon and the new setting of the pilgrims' access to the Well of the Star [PLAN I.13]. A new, smaller structure was erected close to the north-eastern corner of the choir wall to enable pilgrims to peep into the cistern without entering the space reserved for the clergy: the mouth of the new well consisted of two superimposed marble blocks, the upper one being embellished with simple moldings [FIG. 28]. It must be stressed that the holy cistern never ceased to be regarded as one of the main attractions of Bethlehem: even in the very synthetic description left by an anonymous pilgrim in the first years of Crusader rule the church was said to be worship-worthy on account of its status as Christ's birthplace and the presence of the blessed well where the star had fallen.²⁵ Besides, the symbolism of the star was so pervasive, that a lead reproduction supported by a staff was put on display on the church roof.²⁶

Indeed, the displacement of the well implied significant alterations in the area. If the identification of the sixth-century well-mouth with the baptismal font [FIG. 22] is correct (see above, chapter 2), it can be assumed that the latter was dismantled in this same period and reassembled in the present location in the south nave. It can also be supposed that, in order to make it suitable for the performance of baptismal rites, it was then provided with a white marble basin, which was still seen by Quaresmi in 1626.²⁷

The altar space communicated via a stairway directly with a new, quadrangular room which was erected to the south of the east apse and was almost certainly used as a sacristy: it corresponded to the present-day Greek chapel of Saint George [PLAN I.E].²⁸ Another specificity of the Western rite was the need for side-altars intended for the performance of secondary rites and votive masses.

28 | The Crusader Well of the Star in the north transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem



It is therefore no surprise that many side-altars could be seen in the Crusader church: one was set up in the south transept, two leant against the choir screen in the central nave and three were located in the north transept [PLAN IV]. Of the latter, the one known as “the table of the Magi” [PLAN I.B], lying close to the Well of the Star and soon identified as the site where Mary had laid refreshments for the three Wise Men from the East, was already extant prior to the Crusades, given that it was probably identical with that described by Hyacinth, in the mid-eleventh century, as the table

23 As witnessed by Felix Fabri in 1480: cf. his *Evagatorium*, ed. Hassler 1843–1849, I, p. 468.

24 John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 957.

25 *Qualiter sita est civitas Ierusalem*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, I, p. 2.

26 As witnessed around 1169 by Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 180.

27 Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 643.

28 Bagatti 1952, p. 226; Hamilton 1947, p. 84; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 150; Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012, pp. 17–18.



29 | The northern entrance to the Holy Cave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 12th century with later restorations

of the Last Supper.²⁹ It is highly probable that this served originally as the table of the *prothesis* of the sixth-century Byzantine church.³⁰

The new setting of the east end and the elevation of the choir screen implied also the reshaping of the two side-entrances to the Nativity cave. These |FIGS 29, 75| were embellished with arched marble portals flanked by colonnettes: the lunettes displayed acanthus motifs and, on the north side, also an *opus sectile* star.³¹ The general setting of the cave was basically left unaltered and it is highly likely that many of the furnishings described in the pilgrims' travelogues still belonged to the sixth-century decoration. The same ambiguous dating is ascribed to the western extension of the grotto, which is probably the outcome of different construction phases.³² Apparently, the most relevant intervention concerned the site of the manger. In the eyes of Latin believers, this was no longer to be viewed as the original cult-object, given that many of them were perfectly aware that it had been translated to Rome many centuries earlier.³³ The relic was surrogated by a low marble structure with three openings that enabled pilgrims to kiss the underlying soil.³⁴

Oddly enough, one pilgrim said that it owed its worship-worthiness not to its association with the Nativity, but with the Passion. It was claimed to be the stone on which Christ's head lay when he was buried in the sepulcher: Jerome would have translated it to Bethlehem.³⁵ In its turn, the spot of Christ's birth, located under an altar table supported by four colonnettes, was marked on the marble floor of the niche with a simple, small cross.³⁶

The local network of holy sites was undoubtedly much expanded under the Latin rule. The bodies of the Holy Innocents were still said to be buried below the south transept, but no pilgrim explicitly reports visiting the underground grottoes |PLAN I.6|, which were perhaps by then no longer accessible.³⁷ On the contrary, the grottoes to the north of the Nativity cave started being exploited as cult-sites. Even if the latter are known to have been used as burial spaces since ancient times and were directly associated with the structural foundations of the sixth-century basilica, their involvement in the pilgrims' circuit is witnessed only from the Crusader period onward. The Latins, who relied on the evidence provided by earlier pilgrims' travelogues, located there the sepulchers of Jerome, Paula

29 The table is mentioned already by Saewulf, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 72. See also, among the earliest sources, *De situ urbis Ierusalem* (1130), 2, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, II, p. 76; Peter the Deacon, *De locis sanctis* (1137), 20, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, II, p. 190.

30 Six side-altars are clearly marked in the plans by Amico 1609, pl. 3, and Quaresmi 1639, plate between pp. 676–677. Cf. Tobler 1849, pp. 92–96; Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 180; Hamilton 1947, p. 83.

31 Enlart 1925–1928, II, pp. 67–68; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 146; Folda 1995, p. 371.

32 Bagatti 1952, pp. 128–135.

33 Cf. *De situ urbis Ierusalem*, 10, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, II, p. 98; Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth [ca. 1154], ed. Boeren 1980, p. 29; John of Würzburg [ca. 1160], ed. Huygens 1994, p. 85.

34 Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179: "*Est autem ipsum presepe marmore candido circummedificatum, habens superne tria foramina rotunda, per que peregrini ipsi presepi optata porrigunt oscula*".

35 Saewulf, ed. Huygens 1994, pp. 71–72.

36 Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179: "*altare venerandum et cavum, cruciolam solotenus impressam habens, habetur, quod quatuor columpnellis marmoreum et grandem lapidem gestantibus compositum est*".

37 Saewulf, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 72; *Innominatus* v, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, III, p. 32.

and Eustochium |PLAN I.9–I2|. They were accessible through a still extant stairway from the cloister of the regular canons.³⁸

Furthermore, attempts were made at promoting worship that had no direct relationship to the memorial functions of the site. Around 1130, the body of Joseph of Arimathea, rediscovered at Rantis, was transferred to and set on display inside the Nativity church on the initiative of the Bishop of Bethlehem.³⁹ In ca. 1169, Theoderic writes that the saint's sarcophagus was set into the wall of a "double-vaulted chapel" located somewhere above the cave and including also an altar.⁴⁰ It has been suggested that this may have been a sort of marble aedicule connected with the choir screen, which has nevertheless left no traces.⁴¹

THE FIRST PAINTED DECORUM

It can be supposed that the basilica seen by the early Crusaders still included much of the earlier, sixth-century decoration. Its sumptuous marble revetments, which were constantly praised as one of the church's most impressive features, were probably all still there. It is more difficult to guess to what extent the figurative ornaments were still visible: in particular, it is not clear whether the reshaping of the south transept in the ninth or tenth century and the destruction of its mosaic images was accompanied by the removal of mosaics also in other parts of the building. Indeed, when the Russian pilgrim Daniel visited Bethlehem around 1106–1108, he stated that the interior was embellished with mosaics and that the same combination of glittering gold *tesserae* and polished marbles was to be seen also in the Nativity cave.⁴²

It can also be wondered what happened to the monumental inscriptions that the Muslims had set on display in the south conch. Al-Harawī in 1173 and Ya'qut some decades later were clearly mistaken when they maintained that the Franks had made

no alterations to the "Mihrāb of 'Umar", but it may be that they relied on sources written before the Crusader restorations, which were achieved in 1169, as we will see below.⁴³ It cannot be ruled out that, for a relatively long period in the first half of the twelfth century, the church still displayed at least large portions of the embellishments made in the previous decoration campaigns, and that the decision to thoroughly redecorate the interior was taken only later on and under special circumstances.

The first interventions were basically meant, as stated above, to provide the church interior with a decoration fitting for the performance of the Latin rite. This implied the refurbishment of the choir and altar zones, which were provided with a new setting and most probably also with some new decorations. Remnants of mural paintings were discovered in 2015 under the plaster covering the east wall of the south transept. All that can still be discerned are a building with lunette-shaped façade and a red-clad angel in orant pose, represented in three-quarter view and turned to the right |FIG. 30|, toward the nearby arched window, which was walled up in its lower part probably in the same period. Another scant trace of mural painting, now partly covered by the icon with the Last Supper laying over the baldachin of the Greek altar of Saint Nicholas, stands out for displaying a flaked surface, a visual

38 Tobler 1849, pp. 179–202; Bagatti 1952, pp. 135–148; Bagatti 1968, pp. 181–222; Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012, pp. 13–14. The presence of the tombs of Paula and Eustochium, alongside with Jerome's, is first witnessed by Saewulf, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 72, and repeated in the *De situ urbis Ierusalem* (1130), ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, II, p. 76. Such texts also reported that the body of Saint Jerome lay in his sepulcher, whereas Theoderic (ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179) described the latter as a cenotaph.

39 *De situ urbis Ierusalem*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, II, pp. 106–108.

40 Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, pp. 179–180: "*Super ipsam autem speluncam capella venerabilis dupliciter testudinata consistit, in qua altare venerandum ad meridiem et versus occidentem sepulchrum Ioseph ab Arimathia in pariete constitutum demonstratur*".

41 Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 146.

42 Daniel the Higoumen, ed. Venevitinov/Seemann 1970, p. 64.

43 Le Strange 1890, p. 299.



30 | Remnants of murals on the east wall of the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, first half of the 12th century

convention which may hint at a soldier's cuirass and so perhaps at the Massacre of the Innocents, given the location of the image close to the latter's burial site. What can be said on safer grounds is that the angel's slight silhouette, the chromatic palette, and the stylized rendering of the architecture are consistent with a dating in the first half of the twelfth century. A very small fragment of mural painting was also discovered in the north transept below the upper left corner of the later mosaic with the Incredulity: all this seems to indicate that the church was already embellished with monumental wall decorations prior to the 1169 campaign.⁴⁴

Incidentally, these new discoveries corroborate what was already known. Mural paintings, rather than mosaics, were used in the first decoration phase of the basilica. They were selected, for example, to decorate a small chapel at the base of the north bell tower. Though heavily repainted in the 1950s, their iconographic program is still recognizable and the reading of this program can be improved by looking at some photographs taken before the restorations.⁴⁵ One of the most interesting features are the *velaria* and simulated



31 | Deisis, mural painting, chapel of the bell tower, Nativity church, Bethlehem, mid-12th century, restored in the 1950s

marbles to be seen on the lower portion of the walls, which ostensibly reminded visitors of the most noble ornaments of the church interior. An arched niche on the east wall was originally meant to house the altar: it displayed the *Deisis*, with Christ enthroned between the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist in the act of supplicating Him on behalf of mankind (FIG. 31). Sainly figures stand to both sides of the composition: those to the right are barely preserved and almost completely defaced by the modern repainting, whereas those to the left (FIG. 32) display physiognomic features revealing their identity as Basil of Caesarea (wearing a long black beard) and Gregory of Nazianzus (whose beard stands out for its curious shape combining two roundish tufts of hair). The intrados of the arch was decorated with the *Etoimasia*, the empty throne that functioned, in medieval iconography, as a visual reminder of the Son of God's Second coming at the end of time.

44 Oral communication by Marcello Piacenti and Domenico Nucatolo.

45 This chapel was never the object of an accurate analysis. The best description is in Bagatti 1952, pp. 74–79.



32 | Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, mural painting, chapel of the bell tower, Nativity church, Bethlehem, mid-12th century, restored in the 1950s



33 | Enthroned Virgin Mary with Joseph and another figure, mural painting, chapel of the bell tower, Nativity church, Bethlehem, mid-12th century, restored in the 1950s

On the south-eastern spandrel of the vault a group of animated apostles, including Saint Peter and one raising his hands upwards, can still be recognized: most probably this composition originally belonged to an Ascension scene. Below is an icon-like image of Saint Stephen, whereas an enthroned Virgin Mary with Saint Joseph and an unidentified figure are displayed on the opposite side: a church-like structure, which is probably evocative of the basilica itself, is represented in the background [FIG. 33]. Finally, two barely visible military saints, distinguished by their mantles, armors, and shields, are painted on the west wall: the one to the left, wearing large, curly hair, is probably Saint George, whereas his black-bearded comrade-in-arms can be identified as Saint Theodore Stratilates [FIG. 34]. On the whole, the painted program seems to be much indebted to the mid-Byzantine standard system of church decoration. Accordingly, icon-like images of saints are displayed on the lower rows of the walls and the upper zones are reserved for narrative compositions. Moreover, the altar space includes elements which are frequent in the decoration of the *bema*, such as the *Etoimasia* and the co-officiating hierarchs: even if Basil is shown in

frontal pose, Gregory of Nazianzus is ostensibly shown in the act of holding a scroll and moving toward the apse, as in contemporary Greek churches.⁴⁶

In order to date these murals, we can only rely on the analysis of some of its stylistic features, which is made especially hard by its repainting. In general terms, the use of heavily linear contours, wide eyes, narrow mouths, and a continuous line giving shape to eyebrows and aquiline noses, the visual emphasis on static, frontal poses, the overall flatness and abstract rendering of the folds are in keeping with the pictorial trends which art history is accustomed to label as “classical Comnenian style” and more specifically with tendencies developing in the Byzantine sphere in the second quarter of the twelfth century. Nevertheless, an accurate inspection reveals some discrepancies: whereas the apostles in the Ascension are marked with a much more cursory rendering of folds and squat bodily proportions, a much more elegant posture, being reminiscent of the classical *contrapposto*, is attributed to such figures as Saint Stephen

46 Walter 1982; Walter 1974; Gerstel 1994; Lidov 1998.

or the two military saints. This may be due to either the collaboration of different hands, or the coexistence of different representational formulas associated with narrative and iconic images.

The use of strongly linear devices to give shape to both facial features and draperies is also encountered in the mural images painted on the columns of the central nave and south inner aisle. The latter were executed in different phases and by different hands, between 1130 – the date provided by the inscription accompanying the Virgin *Glykophilousa* in the south aisle – and 1169, when the church decoration was finally accomplished, or perhaps as late as 1187, when Bethlehem and most of the Crusader Kingdom fell into the hands of Saladin's Egyptian army.⁴⁷ It seems evident that at least at the very beginnings there was no specific intention to decorate the columns with painted images. Their dark-red, smooth surface was undoubtedly not especially suitable for the making of pictorial ornaments, to such an extent that painters were forced to invent an unprecedented technique for this.⁴⁸ Private initiative played here a basic role, as is witnessed by several portraits of donors which were set on display in supplicating pose close to the saintly figures, normally below the lower margin of the latter's mural icons. At the feet of Saint James the Great, on the first column of the south aisle, one still discerns the bowing figures of a couple of pilgrims – a man [FIG. 35] and a woman – who had already visited the saint's tomb in Santiago de Compostela, as is revealed by their prominently exhibited shells, the universally known symbol of pilgrimage to the Galician town. A woman is displayed in a similarly bowing pose below the image of Saint Olaf on the south row of the central nave.⁴⁹

Yet, the most impressive solution occurs in the earliest and only dated image, that of the Virgin *Glykophilousa*, represented enthroned with Her son cheek-to-cheek. An entire family is shown below the lower frame: on the left, a man, wearing mantle and tunic, kneels close to a shield revealing his identity as a knight,



34 | Saint Theodore Stratilates, mural painting, chapel of the bell tower, Nativity church, Bethlehem, mid-12th century

whereas two bare-headed, red- and white-clad women are to be seen on the right [FIG. 36]. Both display their long hair in sign of humility and self-dedication to the Mother of God. A Latin inscription displayed on the lower margin of the image gives expression to the donors' request: *Virgo celestis confer solatia mestis*, "Heavenly Mother, grant solace to the needy". The word *moestus* has different shades of meaning, one hinting clearly at sadness and expressing anxiety vis-à-vis the transiency of life and, even more, fear for the afterlife. Yet, it is sufficient for viewers to glance at the upper portion of the image to realize that the Virgin Mary is already

47 Germer-Durand 1891; Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 168–176; Dressaire 1932; Hamilton 1947, pp. 69–81; Juhasz 1950; Bagatti 1952, pp. 93–106; Folda 1977, pp. 121–122; Kühnel 1987, pp. 143–146; Kühnel 1988, pp. 5–147; Folda 1995, pp. 91–97, 163–166, 283–284, 315–318, 364–371, 462; Kühnel 1999, pp. 208–210; Folda 2008, pp. 28, 54; Folda 2015.

48 The term "encaustic" employed by Folda (2008, p. 28) is anachronistic for this period; cf. the much more appropriate description as a tempera-based paint with pigments suspended in oil or wax (Kühnel 1988, p. 6; Folda 1995, p. 94). More details will hopefully be provided by the planned restoration of the murals in the next years.

49 Kühnel 1988, pp. 16–17, 42–43, 117, 127; Folda 2015; Mahoney 2015, pp. 28–29. In general on donor portraits in the Latin-ruled territories of the Eastern Mediterranean, cf. Bacci 2012.

35 | A Santiago pilgrim as suppliant, mural painting, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1150



engaged in her mediation before Christ on behalf of her particular supplicants: *Fili qui vere Deus precor his miserere*, “O my son, who are the true God, I implore you to be merciful to these people”.⁵⁰

This relatively complex composition bears witness that the earliest images employed in the decorum of the nave were meant to suit the devotional needs of private individuals and did not belong to any wider and organized pictorial program. In this sense, the Bethlehem column paintings can be regarded as a very early manifestation of an approach to the decoration of the church space reserved for the laity that became distinctive of Western devotional life from the twelfth century onward. The scattering of self-contained, icon-like images, known in the art-historical discourse as “votive murals”, along the walls and on columns and pilasters of the church nave was instrumental to the individuals’ increasing desire to publicly visualize their self-dedication to their heavenly defenders and implore them for both spiritual and material health. It can be assumed that the image of Saint James the Great was made to satisfy



36 | Two women bowing at the feet of the Virgin Mary, mural painting, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 1130

the specific request of a couple of pilgrims who perhaps wished, in this way, to accomplish a vow formulated in Santiago. Analogously, it is very likely that the woman who asked to be represented at the feet of Saint Olaf was a Norwegian lady whose basic purpose was to manifest her special worship for the holy king of Norway, who had completed the Christianization of her country. Indeed, when she decided to invest her money in the making of an image, she was probably well aware that this would have contributed to the promotion of the saint’s cult outside the boundaries of Scandinavia and that the saint himself would have been grateful to her.

The intention of the *Glykophilousa* donors was probably less connected with the circumstances of pilgrimage: the staging of a double dialogue, between them and Mary and between the Virgin and her Son, which transformed the composition into a privileged image for a very specific and limited audience, aimed not so much

50 Kühnel 1988, pp. 15–22; Folda 1995, pp. 91–96; Folda 2008, p. 28; Folda 2015, pp. 2–4.

to ask for a benefit in this world as for salvation in the afterlife: the iconographic scheme they chose laid emphasis on the close relationship of Mother and Child and on Mary's capacity to soften Christ's disappointment in the unrepentantly sinful life of human beings. This may imply, as was often the case in the Latin West, that the mural painting was originally intended as a visual reminder for some liturgical activity, such as votive masses and anniversaries, associated with the commemoration and prayers for the souls of private individuals.

It is difficult to ascertain under which specific conditions the columns came to be decorated. If private initiative is evident at least in some cases, it is hardly probable that the making of pictorial decorations took place without some involvement of the regular canons ruling the church. This could simply consist in a more or less tacit consent on their part, but it is very likely that, in many cases, they may have engaged more directly in advising donors and painters about both iconographic schemes and inscriptions. Our understanding of the principles which guided the making of the column images is hindered by the difficulties encountered in establishing a precise chronology. One clue is provided, as Gustav Kühnel has shown, by the peculiar shape of the miter worn by the three holy bishops, which started being used in the Latin West from the mid-twelfth century onward,⁵¹ but for the rest we are obliged to rely on the analysis of stylistic features read by scholars in different, if not thoroughly opposite ways. The issue is further complicated by the different "manners" which can be detected and are frequently described as clues to the involvement of Western, Greek or Arabic artists, even if there is general agreement as to the generalized use and imitation of Byzantine models.⁵²

Be this as it may, all scholars seem to admit that the decoration started as an unplanned multiplication of isolated murals that were gradually integrated into a more coherent program of saintly

images. This holds true especially for the two rows of columns in the central nave, which were all provided with figures of saints displayed respectively on their south and north side. Unlike the murals in the south aisle – painted on the west faces of only six columns and in two cases also on the east faces – these were much more exposed to the gaze of the pilgrims on their way to the Nativity cave and were invested with a much larger public function. Apparently, attempts were made at representing not only universal figures and some distinguished intercessors associated with the specific devotional needs of pilgrims, but also saints serving as spiritual defenders of different professional and social categories, as in the case of holy soldiers, kings, bishops, and deacons. The latter – Stephen and Vincent – could be regarded as particular protectors of the regular canons who ruled the church.

On the other hand, the group of ascetics was selected in such a way as to evoke not only the monastic tradition in general (symbolized by Macarius, Onuphrius and Anthony), but also the most eminent figures of monks and hermits associated with the area of Bethlehem, namely Sabas, Euthymius the Great, and Theodosius the Cenobiarch, the founders of monasteries bearing their names in the Judean desert,⁵³ and the Prophet Elijah, who was regarded as a forerunner of Christian asceticism and was especially worshipped in the Mar Elias monastery on the way to Jerusalem, reconstructed in the twelfth century by Emperor Manuel I Komnenos.⁵⁴ The prominent display of such figures in Bethlehem in the westernmost half of the nave can be regarded as witness to the Latin appropriation of local cultic traditions and to their exploitation

51 Kühnel 1988, pp. 51–58.

52 Kühnel 1988, pp. 128–147; Hunt 1991, pp. 76–77; Folda 1995, pp. 91–97, 163–166, 283–284, 315–318, 364–371, 462.

53 See the survey by Hirschfeld 1992.

54 On Mar Elias cf. Tobler 1853–1854, II, pp. 547–558; Keel/Küchler 1982, p. 606; Pringle 1993–2009, II, pp. 224–226.

to create a shared ground of cultural and political exchange with the Greek and Melkite population. The monastic fathers' engagement against Miaphysitism could be viewed as a model for the Latin and the Byzantine churches' shared interest in the struggle against all heresies and enemies of the Christian faith.⁵⁵

A BYZANTINE-LATIN "JOINT VENTURE"

As far as we can judge, the medium of mural painting was privileged in the first half of the twelfth century and was not confined to the nave columns or an annex chapel: on the contrary, it apparently extended also to the space reserved for the liturgy in the church eastern end. The rediscovery of fragments of painted glass and remnants of the strips of lead used to hold them together in the excavations of the northern, or Franciscan, grottoes may perhaps indicate that the church was provided with colored windows like those embellishing the Gothic cathedrals of Northern Europe: they were most notably embellished with geometric, foliate and animal motifs, including one fish.⁵⁶ This would testify to the early use of stained glass, one century before the only well-attested case in the Holy Land, that of the mid-thirteenth century at 'Atlit, and to the introduction of a specific Western pattern of church decoration.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the major contribution to the church decorum consisted in the embellishment of the upper walls of counter-façade, central nave and eastern end with an uninterrupted mosaic surface. Furthermore, there is some evidence that the narthex was also covered with a similar décor.⁵⁸ This change is somewhat surprising, given that, as indicated above, the interior had already been provided, at least in some parts, with ornaments made in the different and much less expensive medium of mural painting. The works in Bethlehem, which took place, as we will see below,

in the 1160s, bear witness to the fact that mural painting could be easily substituted or integrated with mosaics under particularly favorable circumstances which enabled the clergy ruling a church to cover the extraordinary expenses associated with outmost costly materials and specialized workers. A parallel is provided by the early twelfth-century monastery church in Gelati, Georgia, which was already decorated with murals when its donors (i.e. the court of King David IV, 1089–1125) came to the decision, around 1125, to embellish only the conch of the main apse with a glittering mosaic.⁵⁹ In making use of this medium, the King was aware of its political symbolism associated with the Byzantine capital and its lavish churches and palaces: the Georgian expression "pebble of Hagia Sophia" to describe it perfectly matches Western Europeans' perceptions of the mosaic as a most efficacious and distinctively Byzantine type of monumental decoration.⁶⁰

The special circumstances which led to the refurbishing of the church interior at Bethlehem can be reconstructed from the lavish inscriptions which were set on display in the program itself. The most important of such inscriptions is a bilingual, Latin and Greek one, which can still be seen in a prominent place on the southern wall of the main apse.⁶¹ In spite of its present-day fragmentary state, its contents can be almost entirely reconstructed from

55 Kühnel 1988, p. 126; Jotischky 1994, p. 216; Kühnel 2001.

56 Bagatti 1968, pp. 218–220; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 146.

57 Johns 1931–1932, p. 133; Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 79.

58 Tesserae of the same type as those used in the church interior were found in 2015 in the intrados of the central vault of the nave. I am indebted to Marcello Piacenti and Susanna Sarmati for this information.

59 Khuskivadze 2005, p. 13.

60 Khuskivadze 2005, pp. 46–48. Cf. Cennino Cennini's characterization of the mosaic as a "Greek technique": ed. Brunello 1998, pp. 182–185.

61 Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 672; Du Cange 1668, p. 319; De Vogüé 1860, p. 99; Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 157–158; Hamilton 1947, pp. 55–56; Bagatti 1952, pp. 60–61; De Sandoli 1974, pp. 197–199; Cutler 1986–1987; Hunt 1991, pp. 73–74; Folda 1995, pp. 349–350; Pontani 1999, p. 164; Andaloro 2002, pp. 469–470; Menna 2002; Dietl 2009, IV, p. 1837.

old transcriptions. The two texts, both made with black tesserae on a golden background, stood close to each other, separated only by a vertical band decorated with red, violet, and gold geometric motifs. Given that no signs of repairs or alterations can be observed on its surface, it can be taken for granted that the mosaic was conceived from the beginning as a double inscription.⁶² The message the two texts communicated to viewers was similar, yet not identical. Different was, most notably, the order in which donors were mentioned.

In the Latin text, the leonine verses of which are displayed on the left side, priority was unsurprisingly given to the fifth Latin King of Jerusalem, Amalric I (1163–1174), who was praised hyperbolically as “guardian of virtue, generous friend, comrade of honor and impiety’s foe, patron of justice and piety, avenger of wrong”. Second place was given to the Byzantine Emperor, Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180). Even if he was described as “generous giver and pious ruler”, it is significant that his imperial dignity was thoroughly ignored, and the text was satisfied with reminding readers that he was ruling “over the Greeks” when the mosaic decoration was accomplished. Then mention was made of the Latin bishop of Bethlehem Ralph, or Raoul (1154–1174), who, being “kindly” and “worthy of the Bishop’s dignity”, lived there and ruled the Nativity church. Finally, the inscription ran that all this happened “when the hand of Ephraim, as they say, made for them” the decoration work: we don’t know what was specifically said about the latter, as the last line had already vanished by the seventeenth century. The last words are also unclear: Abel reconstructed them as the adjective *suavem*, “gracious”,⁶³ hinting therefore at the beauty of the work, but alternative readings proposed *tu autem*, “you then”,⁶⁴ or *tua arte*, “with your skills”.⁶⁵

The Greek text, which is known to us in its entirety, was structured in a thoroughly different way. The most prominent place was given, in this case, to the artist Ephraim, or better to the mosaic

itself: “The present work” ran the inscription, “was completed by the hand of Ephraim the monk, painter and mosaicist”. Then indications were given as to the sovereigns under whose rule the work was accomplished, followed by the mention of the Latin bishop of Bethlehem and the chronological details. In the sequence of political authorities, the Byzantine Emperor was given first place: “in the reign of the great Emperor Manuel Porphyrogennetos Komnenos”, ran the inscription laying emphasis on Manuel’s qualities as a leader and his uncontroversial accession to the throne as a basileus “born in the purple”. Then followed Amalric I and Bishop Ralph, who were also given much prominence, yet with a slightly different expression: the works were namely said to have taken place not “in the reign”, yet “in the days of the great King of Jerusalem Lord Amalric, and of the most holy Bishop of holy Bethlehem, Lord Ralph” and no explicit mention was therefore made of the Latin King’s role as ruling institution in the Holy Land. Finally, the date was given according to the Byzantine era, i.e. from the alleged creation of the world, namely “in the year 6677, second indiction”, corresponding to 1169 A.D.⁶⁶

The difference in character between the Latin and Greek texts was largely due to the use of epigraphic conventions specific to Western and Byzantine traditions, and it is very possible that it was not perceived at all, given that those who could read one inscription were probably unable to read the one located close-by.⁶⁷ Nonetheless,

62 Cf. Cutler 1986–1987, p. 182, who suggests, on the contrary, that the Latin inscription may have been added in a second moment.

63 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 157.

64 De Sandoli 1974, p. 198.

65 Cutler 1986–1987, p. 182, n. 22.

66 In the past, ambiguous readings of the date were sometimes provided: Bagatti 1952, p. 61, followed by Pringle 1993–2009, vol. I, p. 141, indicates 6673, corresponding to 1165, as an alternative date, which is nevertheless incompatible with the second indiction, as already observed by Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 158, n. 2. Cf. Cutler 1986–1987, p. 181.

67 *Ibidem*, p. 182.

both were unprecedented in many respects. First of all, the display of a double inscription in a prominent location was undoubtedly very striking. Secondly, albeit in a different sequence and in a more or less explicit way, they indicated that the beautiful mosaic decoration was the outcome of an unprecedented financial and political collaboration between the Byzantine Emperor, the King of Jerusalem and the Latin Bishop of Bethlehem. This consisted of joint patronage on the part of these three actors, although this was not clearly stated in the Greek text and only Manuel Komnenos' specific involvement as a generous sponsor seems to be implied by the expression *dator largus* in the Latin inscription.

Scholars have long since acknowledged that the 1160s were a highly favorable period for Byzantine-Latin relations in the Holy Land. In the mid-twelfth century, Constantinople and Jerusalem formed an alliance against the rising regional power of Nur ad-Din in Syria, which led to King Baldwin III's marriage with Theodora, Manuel's niece, in 1157, and to the recognition of Byzantine seigneurial rights over Antioch. Nevertheless, relations between the two courts cooled significantly after the Emperor chose Mary of Antioch instead of Baldwin's cousin Melisende of Tripoli for his second marriage in 1161. Even if the state of formal military alliance was not interrupted, it was not until 1167 that more intensive diplomatic connections were reestablished. Finally, in 1171, Amalric made a state visit to Constantinople, which culminated in a public ceremonial described, at least by the Byzantines, as the King of Jerusalem's official act of vassalage before the *basileus*.⁶⁸

An important aspect of Manuel Komnenos' policy in these decades was his engagement in negotiating a compromise, also on theological grounds, with the Latin and Miaphysite churches and promoting trans-confessional recognition of his role as Christian emperor. Most remarkably, he relied on a Latin scholar, the Pisan Hugo Etherianus, for theological matters and required his special

assistance in the debate over the complex relationship between Father and Son in the Passion which culminated with the synod celebrated in the Byzantine capital in 1166.⁶⁹ In 1171 the Emperor sent envoys to the Katholikos of Cilicia Nerses Šnorhali in Hromkla, with the aim of convincing him to subscribe to an article of faith in nine points formulated in a way deemed acceptable for both Byzantines and Armenians.⁷⁰

Furthermore, a specific strategy of soft power was his patronage of architectural and decoration works in the Crusader Kingdom: in addition to Bethlehem, which was probably his major achievement, he provided the sepulcher of Christ, within the Anastasis aedicule, with a golden revetment and dealt with the restoration of important Greek monasteries, such as that of Saint John the Baptist on the river Jordan and that of Mar Elias on the way to Bethlehem.⁷¹ Also recorded are his gifts of precious books and, according to sixteenth-century sources, the pictorial refurbishment of the *katholikon* of Mar Saba.⁷²

Undoubtedly Manuel Komnenos was interested in exhibiting his munificence in the Holy Land, which made him, in the eyes of Palestinian Latins, Greeks, and Arab-speaking Melkites, a praiseworthy follower of his famous, almost legendary predecessors, Constantine and Justinian. John Phokas did not conceal his pride and satisfaction at his emperor's magnanimous attitude.⁷³ Yet, the Emperor's engagement in Bethlehem should not be over-emphasized: it would be misleading to view the mosaic program

68 La Monte 1932; Lilie 1981, pp. 135–211 (197–200 on Bethlehem); Runciman 1982; Jotischky 1994, pp. 218–219; Magdalino 2002, pp. 69–76; Tessera 2010, pp. 311–351.

69 Dondaine 1958; Jotischky 1994, pp. 214, 219; Magdalino 2002, pp. 92–94.

70 Jotischky 1994, p. 220; Mutařian 2012, pp. 547–549.

71 As witnessed by the twelfth-century pilgrim John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, cols 944, 952, 956. Cf. Weyl Carr 1982, p. 222; Hunt 1991, p. 76; Jotischky 2001.

72 Patrich 2001b, p. 4.

73 John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 957. Cf. Jotischky 2001, p. 86.

in the Nativity church as directly mirroring his political ambitions and to minimize the role played by other actors, who are also clearly mentioned in the inscriptions and not simply for the sake of form. Even if the basilica was no longer used for the kings' coronation rite in Amalric's times, it still played a key role in the ideological self-definition of the Crusader kingdom. As revealed by the 2010 dendrochronological and radiocarbon analyses,⁷⁴ in the same period the Latins were dealing with repairs to the roof: this may have been due to damage caused by the earthquake of 1160, which had destroyed the nearby monastery of Mar Elias.⁷⁵ It can also be assumed that portions of the original frescoed decoration may have come off on this occasion, so making the need for new embellishments especially urgent. It is also possible that the court may have been especially eager to involve the Byzantine emperor in the restoration works because the coffers of the Jerusalem court, depleted by the Kingdom's unceasing state of war, were insufficient to cover the restoration bill.

Nevertheless, the engagement of the Latin Bishop should not be underestimated. Ralph, an Englishman by birth, had strong ties with the court, given that he had served as chancellor of the kingdom since 1146. In 1159 he had made the personal acquaintance of the Byzantine Emperor during the negotiations held at Mopuestia. Two years earlier, he had been appointed Bishop of Bethlehem with royal and papal support, after his candidature to the Archbishopric of Tyre had been rejected by part of the local clergy. It was under his episcopate that the legal status of Bethlehem as Bishop's see came to be definitively ratified: after the Crusader conquest of Ascalon in 1153, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem attempted to reestablish the ancient ecclesiastical structure of Byzantine Palestine and a controversy arose which lasted from 1163 until 1168, when the two dioceses were merged and subjected to the Bishop of Bethlehem.⁷⁶ Probably, the expression *pontificis dignus...*

honore, “worthy of the Bishop's dignity”, in the Latin inscription should be read against this background: Ralph's engagement in improving the splendor of his basilica underscored the role of his church as legitimate ecclesiastical see.⁷⁷

In this respect, the testimony of John Phokas is significant: even if he tended to exaggerate Manuel Komnenos' role as benefactor to such an extent that he credited him even with the reconstruction of the building – whereas he clearly meant the thorough refurbishing of its decoration – he wrote that the display of the Emperor's image in different places of the church interior, including the sanctuary, was due to the initiative of the Latin Bishop, who would have so done in thanksgiving for Manuel's liberality.⁷⁸ This may indirectly indicate that the Bishop played an active role in coordinating the decoration works and in administering the financial budget that, as the expression “generous giver” seems to indicate, was largely due to Manuel's support. Indeed, a fifteenth-century text confirms that the Emperor's portrait was set on display in the *bema* close to the dedicatory inscription.⁷⁹ On the other hand, Phokas' hint at multiple portraits displayed in different parts of the sacred space is most likely an exaggeration due, perhaps, to his misinterpretation of the representations of the holy kings on the nave columns.⁸⁰ It cannot be ruled out that Manuel's dedicatory image set in the sanctuary may have originally been associated with another one displaying King Amalric: in the fourteenth century, the Arabic philosopher Ibn Khaldūn observed that the church housed many images of kings with the dates of their rule,⁸¹ and in the seventeenth century

74 Bernabei/Bontadi 2012, p. 59.

75 Amiran, Ariei and Turcotte 1994, p. 270.

76 Hamilton 1980, pp. 59–60, 140–141, 117–118; Jotischky 1994, p. 215.

77 Kühnel 1993–1994, p. 101.

78 John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, p. 957.

79 Daniel of Ephesus, Διήγησις, ed. Destounis 1884, p. 19.

80 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 159.

81 Ibn Khaldūn, ed. al-Ṭanjī 1951, p. 350. Cf. Matar 2013, pp. 172–173.

a French visitor was still able to recognize many royal figures in the church sanctuary.⁸² On the other hand, given that the sections of wall close to the inscription were occupied by narrative scenes and there was apparently no place for supplementary images, it may be wondered whether the portrait seen by Phokas and the crowned figures still visible in later centuries were representations of saints, such as Old Testament kings, which may have embellished the columns underneath.

MASTER EPHRAIM AND HIS WORKSHOP

It is beyond doubt that the making of the new mosaic decoration served to enhance the prestige of its donors. Nonetheless, it is also striking that both inscriptions stressed the artist's specific contribution and that the Greek text mentions the latter's name even before that of the Byzantine emperor. Ephraim's technical skills are given special prominence. Whereas the word *ἱστοριογράφος*, literally "painter of narratives", is often used in Byzantine Greek as synonym for *ζωγράφος*, "painter", *μουσιάτωρ*, "mosaicist" or "mosaic worker", is a thoroughly unprecedented expression (though probably modeled on the Late Antique word *μουσιάριος*/*musaearius*, "wall mosaicist"),⁸³ which is here specifically used to underscore the artist's skills as creator of mosaics. This special emphasis can hardly be underestimated. If the inclusion of artists' names – improperly described in scholarship as "signatures" – into Late Antique floor mosaics was relatively frequent in Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean countries,⁸⁴ it became extremely rare in the Byzantine sphere prior to the thirteenth century.⁸⁵ The earliest examples date from the tenth and eleventh centuries and are basically known from humble churches and funerary cave chapels in the Salento and the island of Cythera.⁸⁶ In such cases as in later examples, names were normally included in inscriptions

displayed in inconspicuous locations and consisting of invocations for forgiveness and salvation in the afterlife. Less frequently and especially in villages, where the difference in social status between painters and donors was minimal or painters themselves engaged in the sponsorship of church embellishments, painters' signatures were sometimes part of dedicatory inscriptions. Apart from names, very few details were given as to the artists' identity: their places of origin were rarely mentioned, whereas emphasis was given to their position in society, especially in the case of members of the clergy, such as monks and deacons. Finally, painters refrained from praising their skills and, on the contrary, described themselves as "sinful", "humble", "contemptible" or even "unskilled".⁸⁷

Who was then this Ephraim, who could afford to display his name in such an ostentatious way, in the company of civil and religious authorities, and without any sign of self-deprecation? In the twelfth century, the use of inscriptions conveying the artists' self-assessment and pride in their artistic skills was certainly much more frequent in the West than in Byzantium or the Christian East and it may be that Ephraim took inspiration from some now lost Latin epigraph.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Bethlehem inscription is different in that it avoids all laudatory expressions and lays emphasis on the distinctiveness of the technique used to give shape to the decoration. This is indeed not only the first known signature of a Byzantine mosaicist (the few names we know were transmitted by written sources

82 Bremond 1669, book II, chapter 36, p. 4.

83 Donderer 1989, pp. 18–19.

84 Hachlili 2009, pp. 243–249. The Greek word employed is normally ψηφοθέτης, "layer of tesserae".

85 Vassilaki 1997b.

86 Djurić-Tsitouridou 1986, pp. 76–77; Pontani 1999, p. 164; Safran 2014, p. 95.

87 Kalopissi-Verti 1994; Kalopissi-Verti 1997; Pontani 1999, pp. 164–166; Kalopissi-Verti 2007; Panagiotidi 2007.

88 Folda 1995, p. 351. On Latin artists' self-assessments in church inscriptions from the twelfth century onward cf. Dietl 2009, I, pp. 100–113.



37 | Basil, Latin and Syriac inscription with indication of the artist's name, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

and not exhibited on church walls),⁸⁹ but also the first in which his professional skills as creator of mosaics are distinguished from those of a simple painter. Even in the West, the word *pictor* was indiscriminately used to describe all those artists who gave shape to colored, bidimensional images, regardless of their technical medium.⁹⁰

It is therefore possible that inspiration was not Western, but Islamic. An earlier mosaicist's signature could be read in a most prominent inscription displayed in the dome of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem: it praised the virtues of Fatimid Caliph al-Zāhir, mentioned the patronage of the vizir Abu'l-Qāsim 'Alī, and reported that the mosaic decoration had been achieved on 6 October 1035 by the Egyptian artist 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan.⁹¹ In contrast to medieval Greek and Latin usage, different words were used in contemporary Arabic to specify the professional skills of the different types of painters: *muzawwiq*, the expression employed in Jerusalem, hinted at anybody who dealt with golden decorations and, more specifically, with mosaics.⁹² It may therefore be

that, by analogy with this linguistic practice, the Greek neologism *μουσιάτωρ* was invented to lay emphasis on Ephraim's specific technical competence. If this were the case, we should infer that he was familiar with Arabic language and artistic terminology and that he aimed at displaying his name in terms reminiscent of the important precedent in the Ḥaram Mosque.

By contrast, the unspecific Latin word *pictor* was used in another bilingual description, which was inserted into the lower edge of an angel image displayed between the seventh and eighth window of the north wall of the central nave (FIG. 37). Unlike Ephraim's signature, this was barely visible and was not invested with any official meaning. It was used by one of his collaborators, a certain Basilius, to manifest his special piety: the display of his name close to the feet of an angel represented in orant pose and moving eastwards to the main apse was meant to surrogate an act of self-dedication to his heavenly intercessors, in the hope that they may acknowledge their gratitude for the painter who had glorified them with so glittering and beautiful images. The Latin inscription *Basilius pictor* on the left side was accompanied on the right by another one in Syriac estrangelo script, which read "Basil the deacon painted [this image]". The proposed identification of this artist with the homonymous miniaturist who signed the Deisis in the Psalter of Queen Melisende, dating from 1131–1143, is unlikely, given the difference in media, the chronological gap between the two works, and the spread of the name Basil in the area.⁹³

89 Chatzidakis 1994, p. 13.

90 Dietl 2009, pp. 93–95.

91 Van Berchem 1927, pp. 383–384, 388.

92 Goitein 1967–1993, I, p. 113, and II, p. 467, n. 106; Rabbat 1998, p. 31. The interpretation of *muzawwil* as "mosaicist" is rejected, anyway, by Stern 1963, pp. 44–45, who considers it as referring to stucco workers.

93 Buchthal 1957, pp. 2–9; Borg 1981, pp. 10–11; Hunt 1991, p. 75; Folda 1995, pp. 352–353; Dietl 2009, p. 93; Kominko 2010, p. 62.

Indeed, the use of Syriac is indicative of Basil's belonging to one of the several Arab-speaking Christian communities who lived in the Holy Land.⁹⁴ It must be stressed that Syriac was by then no longer spoken in everyday life and its use was restricted to religious literature and liturgy. It was typical of non-Chalcedonian, Miaphysite Syrians (also known as West Syrians, Syrian Orthodox, or Jacobites) and East Syrians or Nestorians: whereas the latter's presence was minimal in the Holy Land, the former constituted a small, yet flourishing community in Jerusalem during the Frankish period.⁹⁵ The Syrian Orthodox had their own cathedral in Jerusalem and were allowed to officiate in a chapel located close to, yet separated from, the Holy Sepulchre.⁹⁶ It is very probable that, as non-Chalcedonians, they were also not admitted to celebrate with in the Nativity church.

Nevertheless, Syriac, or better its local variant known as Christian Palestinian Aramaic,⁹⁷ was also used by the majority Christian group in Palestine, the so-called Melkites, also termed *Suriani*, "Syrians", in Latin sources. Even if they were mostly Arab-speaking, they belonged to the Orthodox Church and made use of the Byzantine rite, though performed at least in some cases in Syriac. Their clergy, however, was partly of Greek or even Georgian origins. Unlike non-Chalcedonians, this group was not viewed by Latins as belonging to a separate church: their priests were formally subjected to the authority of Latin bishops and were allowed to perform their rites both in their own church and at specific altars in the major shrines, including the Holy Sepulchre, the Tomb of Mary and, presumably, also the Bethlehem church.⁹⁸ It is more than probable that Basil was one such *Surianus*. By so ostentatiously displaying a fine inscription in estrangelo script, he manifested his belonging to the centuries-old indigenous church of Palestine. Strikingly enough, he felt the need, however, to accompany the Syriac text with a Latin, not a Greek inscription, where no mention was made

of his status as a deacon. Presumably, this was done in recognition of the institutional authority of the Latin clergy, or in any case with the aim of catching the attention of Frankish beholders and encouraging them to pray for Basil's soul.

Instead, Greek was used in yet another inscription which, in the seventeenth century, was still readable close to the corner of the western wall of the south transept, in the vicinity of the now lost mosaic with the Arrest in the Garden. Curiously enough, the meaning of this text was distorted to such an extent that it was considered by some scholars to bear witness to the involvement of a Venetian painter, named "Zan", in the mosaic workshop. Yet, this is largely due to the modern misunderstanding of Quaresmi's transcription of a text which was already in a much fragmentary state in the seventeenth century, so that it is not even clear if the letters Z and AN were contiguous or separated by a space.⁹⁹ Indeed, the Venetian form *Zan*, or more commonly *Çan*, is the dialectal variant of John, *Giovanni*, used exclusively in compound names and witnessed in Venetian sources only from the thirteenth century onward.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that this vernacular form may have been used in inscriptions displayed in the public

94 Kühnel 1987, pp. 148–149; Hunt 1991, p. 74.

95 Karkenny 1976; Palmer 1991; Palmer 1992.

96 Hamilton 1980, p. 195.

97 Morgenstern 2011.

98 Brincken 1973, pp. 74–77; Nasrallah 1974; Hamilton 1980, pp. 170–171; Nasrallah 1987, pp. 159–162; Pahlitzsch 2001, sp. pp. 181–213.

99 Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 673, transcribes the inscription in this way: "[Μ]ΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΚΘ ΤΟΝ: ΔΟΥΛΟΝ ΣΟΥ Ζ ΑΝ ΙΙΙ". Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 167, followed by Bagatti 1952, p. 63, and Hunt 1991, p. 74, reconstruct the text as "μνήσθητι κ(ύριε) τὸν δοῦλόν σου Ζαν", which is incorrect on grammatical grounds, given that the verb μμνήσκω is followed by the genitive, and not by the accusative case. Quaresmi correctly interpreted ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥΛΟΝ as a genitive plural – τῶν δοῦλων, the confusion of omicron and omega being current in twelfth-century Byzantine inscriptions: cf. Panagiotidi 2007, p. 73, and the many cases listed in the comparative tables at pp. 88–116. Hunt's tentative identification of "Zan" with a Venetian painter's name (Hunt 1991, p. 74, n. 33) is also accepted by Folda 1995, p. 353; Folda 2008, p. 51.

100 Tomasin 2000, pp. 135–136.

domain, where the Latin form *Iohannes* was normative, and it is difficult to explain why a Venetian painter would have made use of a Greek signature in a church where the Latin rite was prevalent. More interesting is the function of the inscription: like Basil's, it was meant as a request for protection in the afterlife, where Christ was asked, as the inscription implies, to remember not one, but more people who proclaimed themselves his faithful servants. Given the location on the upper portion of the wall, it is more than probable that these people were mosaicists from the same workshop as Ephraim and Basil.

The information provided by the inscriptions enables us to get a clearer picture of the internal organization of this painters' workshop. The very fact that so many signatures were displayed in the mosaics bears witness to the artists' wish to be remembered in a place that was not only a beautiful church, but also a most holy Christian site. They most probably felt privileged to have their names located close to the cave of Christ's birth and imagined that this could contribute to their spiritual health. Perhaps more than any Western model, it was this hope that encouraged Ephraim to place his name at the top of the *bema* inscription, which was more official in character. Given that this monk was the only artist to be mentioned in that prominent place, he must have played a leading role.

It can be assumed that he was the general designer of the figurative cycle and the one who prepared the cartoons and made the drawings underlying the most important compositions,¹⁰¹ whereas Basil and the other unknown collaborators dealt with the production and setting of the mosaic tesserae. It is anyway also possible that Ephraim's higher status was due to his authorship of either the mosaics located in the most prominent parts of the church or the compositional elements deemed to be nobler, such as the images of Christ, Mary, and the apostles. There is some evidence from other twelfth-century mosaics, such as those from the 1140s

in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, that images could be simultaneously given shape by different artists specialized in landscapes and others who dealt with human figures.¹⁰² Presumably, others were entrusted with the golden background, which could probably be left to the less experienced. The delineation of faces and body parts was probably the most complicated task, implying the use of smaller tesserae to simulate light and shade effects. It can be assumed that the span of three years, from the reestablishment of more official diplomatic relations between Jerusalem and Constantinople in 1167 and the year 1169 reported in the *bema* inscription, was sufficient for an expert team to accomplish the works, even if the general impulse for the redecoration of the church may have originated several years before, perhaps, as suggested by Gustav Kühnel, after the appointment of Ralph as Bishop of Bethlehem in 1156 or, anyway, in the early 1160s.¹⁰³

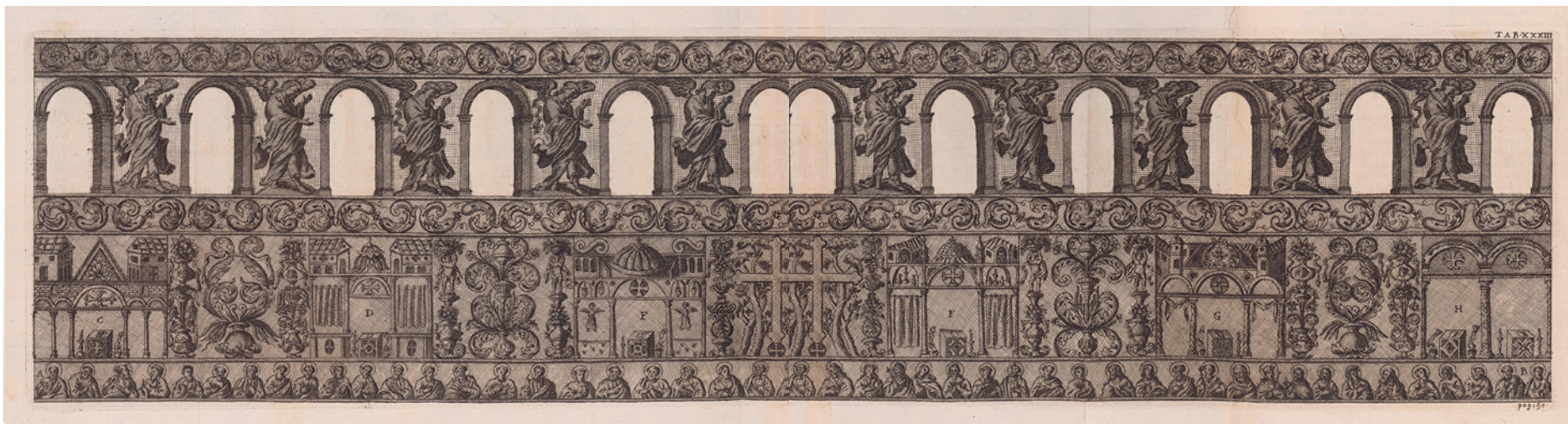
THE DECORATION PROGRAM OF THE NAVE

Whereas Basil's identity as an Arab Christian is revealed by his Syriac signature, nothing is known of Ephraim's origins. Was he a Byzantine master, who had been sent by Manuel Komnenos to supervise the works, or an Arab Christian like his collaborator? Indeed, Constantinople was an important production center for mosaics and from early times Emperors had been accustomed to use mosaics and mosaicists as diplomatic gifts and strategies to assert the court's prestige in foreign countries. Materials and artists had been sent as far as Yemen, the Islamic holy sites of Medina and Mecca, al-Andalus, Kiev, Georgia, Venice, and Sicily to decorate important

101 Cutler 1986–1987, p. 183. Cf. Folda 1995, pp. 353–354.

102 Brenk 2010, pp. 56–65. On the organization of work in mosaic ateliers cf. also Andaloro 1986; Andaloro 1995, pp. 167–169.

103 Kühnel 1988, pp. 145–147; Kühnel 1998, p. 155.



38 | The mosaics on the north wall of the central nave, engraving, late 17th century, after Giovanni Ciampini, *De sacris aedificiis a Constantino magno constructis synopsis historica*, Rome 1693

religious buildings and it is very possible that Ephraim acted in Bethlehem as the Emperor's envoy and trusty man.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, we know that Manuel also recruited local Melkite Christians as work superintendents: John Phokas states, for example, that the reconstruction of Mar Elias Monastery was entrusted to "the Syrian man who was administering it", i.e. presumably the local Melkite higoumen.¹⁰⁵ The available evidence is unfortunately (or perhaps luckily) not enough to provide us with firmer ground to assess the cultural identity of the artists at work. Undoubtedly the workshop included people of different origins, who made use of various languages. Given that the authority of Greek language and tradition was obviously acknowledged also by the Arab-speaking Melkites, we cannot take for granted that the display of Greek inscriptions may have been purposely used as an indicator of Ephraim's and his anonymous collaborators' origin in mainland Byzantium.¹⁰⁶

Lacking further information, we can only rely on the analysis of the work itself for clues as to the artists' provenance and, perhaps

more importantly, the artistic traditions in which they were trained. Even if only remnants are still preserved, we are in a position to reconstruct the original program via old descriptions found in a number of pilgrims' travelogues and, more systematically, in Francesco Quaresmi's 1639 *Elucidatio Terrae Sanctae*.¹⁰⁷ Albeit inaccurate, an engraving made in the late seventeenth century (FIG. 38) by the Franciscans and published in Giovanni Ciampini's 1693 study of Emperor Constantine's ecclesiastical foundations enables us to get a clearer picture of the overall appearance of the mosaics displayed on the northern wall of the nave.¹⁰⁸

104 Chatzidaki 1994, p. 13; Concina/Flores David/Guidetti 2011, pp. 140–141, 200, 203–205.

105 John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 956.

106 On the shifting uses, among Arab Christians, of Syriac, Greek and Arabic scripts and their possible interpretation as identity markers cf. Immerzeel 2009, pp. 172–174; Snelders 2010, pp. 379–412.

107 Quaresmi 1639, II, pp. 645–673. Cf. Kühnel 1987; Kühnel 1993.

108 Ciampini 1693, pp. 150–162.

First of all, it must be remarked that the cycle is remarkable in its extent. It does not match standard Byzantine patterns of church decorum, in that it displays an uninterrupted mosaic surface in the upper portions of the nave, transept, and sanctuary walls. In Byzantium, this most precious and most appreciated medium was normally used to embellish only the most prominent zones of the sacred space, such as apse conches, domes, the hemispherical parts of the naos, and the narthex. This was also due to the preference for central-planned, instead of basilican buildings, in the mid-Byzantine period. In this respect, the solution in Bethlehem was much more akin to that employed in San Marco in Venice or in the royal foundations of Sicily, the interiors of which were similarly covered with a coherent and all pervasive mosaic decoration. These, though relying on a definitely Byzantine repertory of forms, took inspiration from the ancient basilicas in Rome, the longitudinal shape of which was especially suitable for the display of narrative scenes meant to be viewed in a sequential or chronological order.

However, apart from the unbroken extension of the mosaic surface, the Nativity church did not conform at all to such Western models. The program adopted was totally unprecedented and can only be understood in its specific context and under the specific circumstances which led to its making. It is worth stressing that the viewing process of mosaics was directly associated with the very peculiar religious experience that beholders expected to have in the holy site. Most of those who entered the church had the underground cave as their primary goal. When going through the nave door, they immediately scrutinized the sacred space to locate the entrance to Christ's birthplace. The elevated choir worked as an indicator of the holy site underneath, and the first image that drew their attention was probably the Virgin Mary displayed in the apse conch between Abraham and David, which reminded them of Christ's Incarnation and his role as the Messiah. According to some

fourteenth-century authors, the composition was very impressive and the Mother of God was represented "with Christ in the middle",¹⁰⁹ according to the *Platytera* type (i.e. in orant pose with the pre-Incarnated Son of God in a medallion)¹¹⁰, as is clearly stated in a Greek *proskynetarion*, or guide-book for pilgrims, first reported in a manuscript dating from 1585–1586.¹¹¹ Possibly, images of apostles and other saints could be seen in the lower tribune.¹¹²

In the beholder's experience, this composition interacted strongly with the processions of angels displayed on both sides of the central nave on the upper wall between the windows, only the north one being still partly preserved [FIG. 39]. They were represented moving eastwards, in the act of bowing and supplicating the Mother of God. Movement was efficaciously evoked by the alternated display of two different poses: one more dynamic, with the left knee raised, and one more static, with the left leg put forward. The artist took care to differentiate each figure by highlighting wings alternately with either silver or golden chrysography. The latter was also used to embellish the garments of some angels. Each figure's feet rested on a paradisiacal meadow, rendered in different shades of green and inhabited by twisting campanula-like plants. A distinctive technical feature indicates that many efforts were made to make these images especially attractive for their viewers: in the golden backgrounds the tesserae are set in their bed in such a way as to slope downwards, so that they may reflect more light when seen from below. The windows, which channeled the light into the interior and may have been decorated with colored or stained glass,

109 Niccolò da Poggibonsi, ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 81; Nicola de' Martoni, ed. Piccirillo 2003, p. 72. Cf. Kühnel 1987, p. 138.

110 Kühnel 1987, p. 138; Folda 1995, p. 362.

111 Kadas 1986, pp. 253, 287.

112 The presence of mosaic images of apostles and martyrs in the wider east end of the church is mentioned in a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Greek *proskynetaria*: cf. Kadas 1986, pp. 84, 92.



39 | Procession of angels, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169



40 | Rinceaux with mushrooms, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

visually interacted with the nearby figures. Each of them was framed within a decorative border embellished with red stepped ornaments on a white background.

The sumptuousness of the angel procession was enhanced by its lavish upper border (FIG. 40), decorated with an uninterrupted plant volute formed by the combination of upward- and downward curved green leaves. Other leaves of similar shape, yet of gray color, spring out of the latter's joining points: they terminate in berry-like fruits and mushrooms with white stipes and reddish, convex caps. The display of fungi in such a prominent location is somewhat dazzling. In Byzantine and Western medieval culture, the reputation of such vegetables was rather low: they were not invested with any symbolic meaning and, most frequently, they were regarded with suspicion, perhaps on account of their ancient association with Pagan mystery cults and their use as poisons – well known was, for example, Emperor Claudius' death by intoxication from *amanita caesarea*.¹¹³ Prior to the twelfth century, representations of mushrooms are encountered only in the illustrations of Byzantine medical, and more specifically toxicological treatises,

where they are rendered in a way similar to that used in Bethlehem, yet normally with a brownish, not reddish cap.¹¹⁴ This latter detail may indicate that the composition aimed to evoke a kind of poisonous mushroom, such as the ill-famed *amanita muscaria*, which was accordingly represented as springing from a dead, unnaturally grey-colored leaf.

Two mushrooms, of green and white color, appear also in the lower ornamental band, which displays even more elaborate and fanciful volutes, shaped by the juxtaposition of green, blue, and grey leaves with mostly crenate edges. The foliage regularly expands into multicolored swirls terminating with fruits, acorns, berries, grapes, and flowers, the latter marked with mother-of-pearl inlays. Small fruits of different shape (probably dates and acorns) sprout also from other joining points among the leaves. In one case, the volute ends with a wolf's head, represented in profile with open mouth and a very prominent pointed tooth. Other animals (FIG. 41) are housed within or close to the spirals: they include – from right to left – an antelope, a little bird, a lion's head, a rabbit, a dromedary, a running hare and a bigger bird (possibly a pheasant). The volutes entangle also a number of inanimate objects, such as three chalices, an ampulla, a sort of shield umbo, and possibly a crown. All this is represented against a golden background bordered by two white bands with alternating lozenges and roundels delineated in gold.

The display of vegetal volutes evoked a number of visual associations that could be easily recognized by twelfth-century visitors. They were given a very prominent role in the mosaic decoration of the most eminent Islamic monuments in Jerusalem, the Dome

113 Houghton 1885; Levi d'Ancona 1977, pp. 234–236; Helittula 1989; Birkhan 2012, pp. 72–74; Bertelsen 2013, pp. 85–86.

114 Pavlovna Wasson/Wasson 1957, pp. 353–354; Durr 2016, pp. 172–173, 203.



41 | Rinceaux with animals, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169



42 | Ornamental band with rinceaux, mosaic, Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, ca. 697

of the Rock and the Aqsa-Mosque, which the Crusaders had converted into Christian holy sites, respectively known as the “Lord’s Temple” (*Templum Domini*) and “Solomon’s palace” (*Palatium Salomonis*).¹¹⁵ Probably Muslims and Christians shared a perception of the emphatically exuberant foliate motifs displayed in such contexts as visual evocations of the beauty of Paradise. It is very possible that, in Bethlehem, the general conception of the *rincaux* and such specific details as the heart-shaped fruits and the roundish grapes were meant to simulate those in the *Templum Domini* [FIG. 42], albeit in a definitely less naturalistic and stylized way. Nonetheless, the artist transformed his model into something unprecedented. First of all, he gave the leaves a form that was more familiar to contemporary viewers and replaced the homogeneous shades of green used in the Jerusalem mosaic with three different colors. Finally, he gave shape to an inhabited scroll, where animals and objects were entangled.

Even if analogous solutions were also known from Romanesque sculpted reliefs in the Holy Land (the most important being the inhabited scroll on the eastern lintel of the Holy Sepulchre doorway),¹¹⁶ the most direct source of inspiration was probably provided by book illumination. The shape of leaves, their multi-colored appearance, and the rather chaotic multiplication of ornaments and figures point to connection with formulas which were by then widespread in Latin miniature painting, including that practiced in the twelfth-century Jerusalem scriptorium: a comparison can be made, for example, with the polychromy of the painted initials of the Sacramentary of the Holy Sepulchre (1128–1130)

¹¹⁵ Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 397–434; Kedar/Pringle 2009; Berger 2012, pp. 75–92.

¹¹⁶ Cf. especially Borg 1969; Kanaan 1973, pp. 225–227; Rahmani 1976; Buschhausen 1982; Rosen-Ayalon 1985; Kühnel B. 1987b; Lindner 1992; Kühnel B. 1994, pp. 42–44; Folda 1995, pp. 226–227; Kanaan-Kedar 1999; Heyman 2015.



43 | Painted initial T with ornamental rinceaux, miniature from the Sacramentary of the Holy Sepulchre, 1128–1130 / Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge), MS McClean 49, fol. 7r

now divided in two parts preserved in Cambridge and Rome [FIG. 43].¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Byzantine contribution should not be forgotten: a revival of the ancient rinceaux motifs, combined with representations of birds, deer, and lion's heads, can be detected, for example, in one of the painted headpieces of the Homilies of James of Kokkinovaphos in the Vatican Library (MS gr. 1162, fol. 55r).¹¹⁸ Even if the immediate model were a Latin manuscript, the combination of ornaments would not have looked unfamiliar, or inappropriate, to a Greek eye.

The lower portions of the nave walls were usually reserved, in longitudinal-planned churches in the West but also in some Byzantine examples, for cycles of narrative scenes, set in a chronological sequence. The solution adopted in Bethlehem totally diverged from

such precedents, in that the images displayed in the mosaics were neither narrative nor iconic [FIG. 44]. They were meant to evoke the seven ecumenical councils on the south wall and seven of the provincial synods of the early church on the northern one. This choice was indeed quite unusual: whereas the synods were never represented in a monumental setting and not even in book illumination, the ecumenical councils were sometimes included in the church decoration, though never in the central nave, but rather in less prominent locations. The case chronologically closest to the Nativity church is the frescoed cycle in the monastery church at Gelati (ca. 1125–1130), which was set on display in the narthex [FIG. 45]. The conciliar fathers are shown there seated together in the presence of the Byzantine Emperors who were known to have presided over each event, whereas standing figures of Orthodox bishops disputing with heretics were represented on the lower segments of wall.¹¹⁹

If compared with this Georgian example, which basically conforms to standard Byzantine iconography, the Bethlehem cycle exhibits numerous distinctive features. It entirely avoided all anthropomorphic elements and displayed architectural structures of composite shape, whose identification as ecclesiastical buildings was made evident by a number of visual reminders of standard features of church decor, such as domes, crosses, altars, veils, lamps, candlesticks, and *vasa sacra* [FIG. 46]. These buildings were separated from each other by fantastic plants combining vegetal, animal, and gem-like forms, whereas the centre of the composition with the local synods on the north wall was marked with a prominent jeweled cross. Each church building displayed on the two walls was meant to evoke the specific places where the conciliar assemblies had taken place and the names of which were revealed by the Greek

¹¹⁷ Buchthal 1957, pp. 14–22, 140–141, 107–121, 128–129; Folda 1995, pp. 100–105.

¹¹⁸ Mouriki 1981, pp. 320–321.

¹¹⁹ Gedeonishvili 2007.



44 | The Synod of Antioch, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

inscriptions displayed above them. More important, and thoroughly unprecedented, was the use of architectural elements as frames to relatively long texts summarizing the theological issues debated in each synod or council and giving details about the number of participants and the names of both chief representatives and the heretics anathematized by the holy fathers: all of them were in Greek, with the notable exception of the one concerning the seventh ecumenical council, Nicaea II (787), which was written in Latin.¹²⁰

The formulas displayed in the mosaics belonged to the genre of the so-called “synopses of synods”, i.e. lists providing the basic information about the early provincial synods and ecumenical councils. Such texts circulated in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic and were frequently included in manuscript collections of Byzantine canon law. They were especially efficacious in their definition of Orthodox identity as grounded on theological definitions formulated by both ecumenical meetings of the universal church and local assemblies whose resolutions had been ratified by later ecumenical councils (especially by the so-called Council in *Trullo* of 698).¹²¹ It may



45 | The Seven Ecumenical Councils, detail, mural painting, monastery church, Gelati (Georgia), 1125–1130

therefore be surprising to see them displayed with such prominence in the decoration of the Bethlehem church. Some scholars interpret them as an ostentatious, even provocative assertion of the primacy of Orthodox faith over Latin belief: in this respect, it is significant that the synopsis of the first Nicaean council lacks any hint at the *filioque*, the controversial addition to the creed which was the subject of major debates between Rome and Constantinople.¹²²

In general, the mosaics convey a very clear message, namely that the authority of the church relied on the decisions taken by the holy synods. Emphasis on conciliarism seems to imply a rather explicit criticism of the central role attributed in the Latin Church to the ministry of the Pope and his *potestas ligandi et solvendi* and is in keeping with Manuel Komnenos’ efforts for the reestablishment of full communion between the Eastern and Western churches.¹²³

120 All inscriptions were transcribed by Quaresmi 1639, II, pp. 645–673. Cf. also Stern 1938.

121 Kühnel 1993–1994, p. 106; Sieben 1979, pp. 344–380; Sieben 2005, pp. 203–241.

122 Jotischky 1994.

123 Hunt 1991, pp. 82–83; Kühnel 1993–1994, pp. 100–103; Jotischky 1994, pp. 220–222.



46 | The Synod of Serdica, detail, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to assume that the program was decided in Constantinople without taking into account the viewpoint of the Bethlehem Latin clergy. The latter was probably unable to understand Greek, but they would have never accepted such visual prominence for the representations of councils if they did not share some of the basic principles underlying them. Bishop Ralph and his canons acknowledged the importance of ancient synods and probably did not interpret their public display as being at odds with the definition of Papal *potestas*. The relations of the Jerusalem Patriarchate with Rome were not always harmonious and the juridical definition of the former's status was a matter of debate during the twelfth century. Daimbert of Pisa's perception of his see as "mother of all churches", so almost equaling Rome in dignity, probably lingered among Latin clerics in the Holy Land well beyond Daimbert's deposition in 1101. On account of its status as apostolic see, the church of Jerusalem was attributed by some authors, such as Gerhoh of Reichersberg writing in the early 1160s, the right to have the last word on such matters as a Papal election when it became the object of controversies. Most notably, the *Orientalis ecclesia* had asserted this right in 1160, when it had been asked to take sides about the controversial succession to Hadrian IV, which had led to the election of two Popes, Victor IV and Alexander III. A synod took place in Nazareth in the summer of that year and its declaration in favor of Alexander III was decisive for Alexander's final victory. Also on account of such recent events, the Latin clergy was perfectly aware that the prestige of their church was strictly connected to the privilege of autonomously calling conciliar assemblies.¹²⁴

A number of details indicate that the choice of a composition displaying texts, instead of images, was an acceptable compromise for both parties. An iconic version would have implied the repeated display of Byzantine emperors chairing ecumenical councils, which

may have been regarded as inappropriate. On the other hand, the deliberate, and unique, use of a Latin inscription for the synopsis of Nicaea II had significant implications. The Byzantines knew that the resolutions of the seventh ecumenical council, which had condemned the Iconoclasts, had been approved by Rome, yet criticized and partly rejected by Charlemagne's Frankish church in the synod of Frankfurt of 799. After the incident of 1054, which led to the mutual excommunication of the Byzantine Patriarch and the Pope's representative, a number of polemical pamphlets widely circulating in the Orthodox world alleged that the Franks were largely iconophobic, and this impression was further corroborated by the destructions of icons and church decorations during the sacks of Thessaloniki (1180) and Constantinople (1204).¹²⁵ The decision to report the summary of Nicaea II in Latin enabled the representatives of the Roman church to assert their thorough recognition of the council's validity and their unconditional worship for holy images, that is their full-title belonging to the universal and orthodox church.

Some details point to more specific connections with the local Melkite, rather than Byzantine metropolitan tradition. The closest parallel to the Bethlehem inscriptions is encountered in the *Nomokanon* of Bishop Michael of Damietta (d. 1208), an Arabic variant preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript now in Paris and another one included in Ibn Kabar's early fourteenth-century text known as *Lamp of Darkness*.¹²⁶ As in Bethlehem, such texts are distinctive in listing the provincial synods as separated from and preceding the seven ecumenical councils, according to the order given in manuscript collections of canons made

¹²⁴ On the ambiguous, unsolved issue of the Latin Patriarch's status in his relationship with the Pope cf. especially Kirstein 2002, pp. 462–469. On the 1160 synod and the debate on the role of Jerusalem as apostolic see cf. Tessera 2010, pp. 300–309.

¹²⁵ Bacci 2003.

¹²⁶ Stern 1938, pp. 417–419; Sieben 2005, pp. 226–228.

specifically for the Melkite church and diverging significantly from the ones used in Greek collections.¹²⁷ In the latter, no distinction between synods and councils was made: the most ancient lists started normally with Nicaea (325), followed by six particular synods – Ancyra (314), Neocaesarea (between 315 and 319), Antioch (ca. 330), Gangra (ca. 340), Serdica (342) and Laodicea (before 380) – and finally by the later ecumenical councils, whereas an even more mixed sequence was used in later texts.¹²⁸ Most notably, the selection used in the mosaics did not conform to contemporary Byzantine synopses, such as that written by Alexios Aristenos at the request of Emperor John Komnenos around 1130.¹²⁹ e.g., it omitted the Council in Trullo, whose resolutions against Latin usages such as priestly celibacy and the Saturday fast on Lent were never accepted by the Roman church. Furthermore, the synod of Carthage it displayed was not that of 419 described by Aristenos, but that organized by Saint Cyprian in 255 against Novatian, which occurs only sporadically in Greek manuscripts.¹³⁰ This synod, by contrast, played a major role in Melkite collections, based on a now lost text used by Patriarch Severus of Antioch (512–518), and, in a number of cases, it took the place of Neocaesarea, which is significantly missing in Bethlehem.¹³¹

Indeed, the sequence of synods displayed on the north wall (Carthage, Laodicea, Gangra, Serdica, Antioch, Ancyra) does not exactly conform to any textual list. This may be due to some practical issues: it can be assumed, for example, that the location of Ancyra, normally the first to be mentioned, at the end of the wall created a visual parallelism with Nicaea on the south wall, given that the two were frequently associated in canonical collections. The display of Serdica after Gangra and before Antioch, in its turn, was in keeping with the order given by a number of Melkite manuscripts.¹³² Seen altogether, such details indicate that the peculiar selection of synods at Bethlehem was inspired by textual sources

associated with the Orthodox Church of Palestine and not directly with Byzantine archetypes.

This leads us to the conclusion that this unprecedented program must have been conceived by somebody who was well acquainted with Melkite canon law, such as a monk from the nearby monastery of Mar Saba, whose cultural life was especially dynamic during the Crusader period. Perhaps we can go so far as to assume that the choice to give so much prominence to the word within a program mostly figurative in character may have been a response not only to wider political issues, but also to more site-specific considerations. It could well be that the authors were aware of the ancient practice of displaying legal texts, including the canons of church councils, in public contexts: Manuel Komnenos had done something of this kind with the final resolutions of the synod held in Constantinople in 1166.¹³³ Nevertheless, in the specific context of the Nativity church, the display of monumental inscriptions concerning articles of faith was not unprecedented: as we have seen in the second chapter, quotes from the Qur'an had been set on display in the south transept and it cannot be ruled out that at least parts of the Islamic ornaments were still visible before the Crusader works in the 1160s. This seems to be implied by both Daniel the Higoumen's hint at remnants of mosaics preserved in the church and al-Harawī's and Ya'qut's mention of the "Mihrāb of 'Umar" as being not altered by the Franks.¹³⁴

It is possible that this precedent stimulated the *concepteurs* of the new program to set up monumental inscriptions that could

127 Kaufhold 2012, p. 227 and the comparative table on p. 229.

128 Troianos 2012a, pp. 116–117, 119, 121–123.

129 Troianos 2012b, pp. 178–180.

130 Ohme 2012, pp. 112–114.

131 Kaufhold 2012, pp. 224, 233.

132 Kaufhold 2012, p. 227.

133 Mango 1963; Kühnel 1993–1994, p. 105; Menna 2002.

134 See above.



47 | Altar within a marble baldachin, mosaic, katholikon of Mor Gabriel monastery, Kartmin, early 6th century

rival and replace the Islamic ones. Something similar had taken place in the Dome of the Rock after its conversion into the Christian *Templum Domini*, where the Franks had displayed Latin quotes from the Bible and the liturgy without cancelling the previous Islamic inscriptions.¹³⁵ By displaying words in the very place where the “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1, 14), the nave mosaics in Bethlehem reasserted the truth of Christian faith and laid specific emphasis on its fundamental principle, shared by Latins and Greeks and rejected by Muslims, concerning Christ’s double nature, both human and divine, as defined against all heretics by the synods and councils of the early, ecumenical church. Even if this message could be read also as a political project, it was above all an efficacious way to invite viewers to meditate on the mystery of Incarnation to which Christ’s birth-place bore witness.

Analogous considerations can apply to the ornaments used to make the cycle more attractive. It would be misleading to imagine, as has been argued, that the architectural structures marking

each of the synods were nothing more than a particularly elaborate frame, such as those used in book illumination for canon tables and other texts.¹³⁶ Such details as the Gospel books lying on altars reminded viewers of some distinctive marks in Byzantine council cycles.¹³⁷ Moreover, the sequence of church buildings seems to have been reminiscent of the early Byzantine “topographic friezes” so widespread in Palestinian mosaic floors¹³⁸ and the elaborate architectural compositions used in Late Antiquity to evoke Paradise and the Heavenly Jerusalem, such as those in the Baptistry of the Orthodox in Ravenna or the Rotunda at Thessaloniki, which relied on their turn on the tradition of ancient stage-set design.¹³⁹ Probably the closest parallels are provided by the early sixth-century wall mosaics in the sanctuary of the Syriac monastery church of Mor Gabriel at Kartmin in the Tur ‘Abdin region of present-day south-eastern Turkey (FIG. 47).¹⁴⁰ Church buildings are here evoked by means of four-columned, ciborium-like baldachins, flanked by plants and housing altars with chalices and a pyx.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Bethlehem architectures are much more elaborate and, in their use of inverse perspective and symmetric stratifications of towers, roofed structures, arched openings, and roundish as well as onion-shaped domes they prove to be in keeping with features recurring in the illuminated frontispieces of several twelfth-century Byzantine manuscripts, where architectural frames were used as evocations of the Heavenly Jerusalem (FIG. 48).¹⁴²

135 Thomsen 1922, pp. 34–38; De Sandoli 1974, pp. 105–124; Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 403–408; Grabar 2006, pp. 159–169. On the importance of inscriptions as visual foci in the Dome of the Rock cf. Milwright 2016.

136 Sieben 2005, p. 241.

137 Walter 1970, pp. 235–239; Kühnel 1993–1994, pp. 94–95.

138 Duval 1994; Duval 1999; Talgam 2014, pp. 124–126.

139 Stern 1957. Cf. Saradi 2010, pp. 81–82, 92–97.

140 Hawkins/Mundell/Mango 1973, pp. 292–293.

141 For analogous structures in fifth-century Syrian floor mosaics cf. Ruprechtsberger 1993, pp. 205, 224–225.

142 Lidov 1998, pp. 349–353; Lidov 2013, pp. 94–119. Cf. Yota 2010, pp. 18–19.



48 | Illuminated frontispiece, from the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, ca. 1136–1155/ Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, MS. Sin. Gr. 339, fol. 4v

In such miniatures as already in the Mor Gabriel mosaics built structures were flanked by representations of gardens and/or single trees. The Bethlehem compositions were probably reminiscent of such precedents, but the vegetables they presented were of a very special and distinctive kind. On the south wall, large foliate plants occupy the space between each of the arched structures evoking the sites of the seven ecumenical councils. In the corresponding locations on the opposite side, thinner plants (also interpreted sometimes, though improperly, as candlesticks)¹⁴³ flank larger ones, sprouting from elaborate vases (FIG. 49): all such elements display a combination of both crenate and dentate, upward and downward curved foliage of different colors with bird's wings, small trees, flowers, vine tendrils, intertwining branches, shells, a sort of flabellum-like object and a number of bejeweled metalworks, including chalices, jars, cups, crowns, and horns of plenty. More than plants,

they look much like hybrids, composed of different materials and forms, all of them, including the vegetal ones, being lavishly bejeweled with roundish mother-of-pearl inlays.

The affinity of such forms with some of the fantastic plants displayed in the 'Umayyad mosaics of the Dome of the Rock (around 691) has been long since recognized, to such an extent that the frieze with the provincial synods came to be regarded by some scholars as dating back to the seventh or eighth century.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this can be ruled out on both technical and stylistic grounds: the whole of the mosaic series is characterized by the use of the same bedding, same mortar, and same type of tesserae, and, in comparison to Jerusalem, the mosaics are distinctive for their strongly stylized rendering of both architectural and natural elements.¹⁴⁵ Many details, such as, e.g., capitals, bejeweled arches or roof coverings are rendered in much the same way throughout the decoration. Should the mosaic be of so early a date, it would provide the earliest known evidence to the use of quadrilobes (FIG. 44) as isolated motifs, simulating wall openings, and not as framing devices, as occurs normally in 'Umayyad and Abbasid monuments.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, quadrilobes are used in the same way also in the Incredulity of Thomas in the north transept (FIG. 59). Furthermore, the building corresponding to the synod of Serdica (FIG. 46) displays twisted columns, a visual convention typical of mid-Byzantine art.

Nonetheless, it is also evident that the H̱aram monuments were the direct source of inspiration for the composite plants in Bethlehem. The clearest evidence of this is provided by details such as the winged motifs that appear most prominently

¹⁴³ Stern 1936, pp. 129–132.

¹⁴⁴ Baumstark 1906, pp. 145–148; Berchem 1927, p. 391; Stern 1936; Stern 1948; Stern 1957; Grabar 1957, pp. 51–53; Folda 1995, p. 361.

¹⁴⁵ Tzaferis 1981; Kühnel 1984; Kühnel 1987, pp. 142–143; Bacci 2015, pp. 52–57; Neri/Verità/Biron/Guerra 2016, pp. 169–170.

¹⁴⁶ Marçais 1945.

in the intermediary space between the synod of Serdica and that of Antioch [FIG. 50]. The latter, displaying bird's wings sprouting out of black cornucopiae decorated with gold foliage, are clearly modeled on the analogous forms used in the drum of the Dome of the Rock, even if their rendering in green color reveals perhaps their misinterpretation as foliage.¹⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, the profusion of jewelry and its hybridization with vegetal elements was something that twelfth-century viewers could immediately associate with the exuberant decoration of the “Lord’s Temple”, yet it must be stressed that the solution used in the Nativity church was far from a plain imitation. Overall, the two cycles are different in many respects: even if single motifs seen in Jerusalem could be appropriated and repeated in Bethlehem, many others, such as the large egg- and heart-shaped forms in the eastern ambulatory, were not. The shape of leaves is also indicative in this respect: the crenate or dentate, strongly stylized and fleshy leaves which were given preference in the frieze of synods are not encountered in the Dome of the Rock, and are much more in keeping with those employed in the drum of the al-Aqsa Mosque, dating from 1035 [FIG. 51].¹⁴⁸ In this, the combination of vegetal elements with grey bird's wings (not sprouting out of horns of plenty) and elaborate cups probably provided a more immediate spur for the work in Bethlehem, which resulted in even more fanciful and exuberant, “grotesque”-like solutions.

It could be wondered why Ephraim's team and their patrons wanted the cycle of councils to look like the earlier mosaics in the Ḥaram monuments. Undoubtedly, the Ḥaram mosaics were the most important example of wall mosaic decoration in the Holy Land; they were eminent and were regarded by artists as the most obvious and direct models for their work. Indeed, they were frequently imitated in a number of later mosaics from the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, on account of their association



49 | Fantastic plants, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

with former Islamic holy places that the Crusaders had invested with Christian meanings, their appropriation and imitation in a Christian setting posed no difficulty. The Paradisiacal symbolism they betrayed to an Islamic eye could be easily detected also by Christians, who were accustomed to thinking of the divine dimension as an exuberant landscape of luxurious plants and bejeweled buildings.¹⁵⁰ But perhaps there was a more deliberate intention to assimilate Bethlehem and the Ḥaram and to present the Nativity church as a sort of heir to the ancient Temple. If the latter had been conceived by the Israelites as God's abode on earth, where his presence (*Shekinah*) could be physically experienced, the humble cave he had chosen as his Son's birthplace could be described as his first terrestrial residence in the Age of Grace, “God's second house

147 Creswell 1932–1940, I/1, pp. 196–198; Grabar 1987, pp. 55–58; Rosen-Ayalon 1989, pp. 15–16; Grabar 2006, pp. 82, 89; Nees 2016, pp. 124–125.

148 Stern 1963, pp. 39–47.

149 Rosen-Ayalon 1976; Rosen-Ayalon 1990; Flood 1997; Korn 2009.

150 Rosen-Ayalon 1989, pp. 46–62; Shani 1999; Grabar 2006, pp. 109–119.



50 | Fantastic plant, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169



51 | Fantastic plant, mosaic, drum, Mosque al-Aqsa, Jerusalem, 1035

after heaven”, as stated by the English historian Ralph of Coggeshall in the early thirteenth century.¹⁵¹ On account of its special status, the church – and more specifically the compositions defining Christ’s nature as both human and divine – deserved to be provided with the same lavish decoration as the divine house chosen by the Lord in the Age of Law.

A monumental cross [FIG. 52] was set on display in the very center of the composition on the north wall of the nave. Other crosses were present in the program, yet they were integrated into the architectural frames of the synods and were of thoroughly different shape: inscribed within medallions and displayed within arcades, they were rayed and had arms of equal length and without ornaments, the only exception being the cross decorating the red dome of the Antioch building, which is studded with gems. The cross in the center was given a much stronger visual prominence: it was clearly located there in such a way as to attract viewers’ attention. Though fragmentary in state, its original appearance can be reconstructed by comparing it with the sketch published by Ciampini [FIG. 38]. It is a cross studded with precious stones, whose vertical arm is longer than the horizontal one. Large roundish rosettes are fixed to the ends of each arm, which are of concave shape and have edges decorated with pearls. Finally, it is accompanied by plants and exuberant trees, visualizing the long exegetical interpretation of Christ’s death instrument as the “Tree of Life”.¹⁵²

On the whole, it corresponds to a representational formula whose distant archetype is undoubtedly the *crux gemmata* erected by Emperor Theodosius II in 428 on the top of Mount Golgotha. Though especially widespread in the fifth and sixth centuries, this type and its many variants, which came to be invested

151 Ralph of Coggeshall, *De expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum*, ed. Stevenson 1875, p. 239.

152 Kühnel 1997.



52 | Jeweled cross, mosaic, north wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

with triumphal and soteriological meanings,¹⁵³ were still current in Palestine in the Crusader period: in Bethlehem itself, a similar shape with concave ends and side-rosettes was attributed to the reliquary-encolpion worn by Saint Theodosius in the south colonnade.¹⁵⁴ A closer inspection of the monumental cross reveals a significant detail: another, smaller cross is inserted at the crossing of the arms, in much the same way as relics of the True Cross were set into Byzantine and Crusader staurothekes.¹⁵⁵ This detail is all the more alien to early representations of the *crux gemmata*, and probably introduces a hint at the most important relic – and identity symbol – of the Crusader Kingdom, the fragment of the Holy Wood found in Jerusalem in 1099. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the image, located in the center of the composition, worked as a visual counterpart to the ancient cross erected nearby in the middle of the nave.¹⁵⁶ When Niccolò da Poggibonsi visited Bethlehem, in 1346, he was able only to see its support, a “colonnette” topped with a “pome”: the latter detail corresponds



53 | Elihud and Eleazar, detail from the Series of Christ's ancestors, mosaic, south wall of the central nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

to the globe, decorated with a cross, whereupon rests the lower arm of the mosaic cross, if we are to believe Ciampini's engraving. In its turn, this detail is in keeping with a type of *crux gemmata* which was widespread in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁵⁷

The lower portion of mosaics below the conciliar images originally displayed the genealogies of Christ according to Luke (3, 23–38) on the north wall and according to Matthew (1, 1–16) on the south wall.¹⁵⁸ Only a fragment of the latter cycle still survives | FIG. 53 |: Jesus' ancestors – Azor, Zadok, Achim, Elihud, Eleazar, Matthan and Jacob – were represented half-length and in frontal pose, with the only exception of Eleazar and Elihud

153 For a complete catalogue of extant representations in Byzantine and Eastern Christian art, cf. Karagianni 2010.

154 Kühnel 1988, p. 90.

155 See in general Klein 2004, and Kühnel B. 1994, pp. 138–153 on Crusader crosses.

156 See above, chapter 2.

157 Kühnel 1997, p. 250.

158 Kühnel 1987, pp. 141–142.

who were shown talking together and slightly turned toward each other. The Biblical figures were displayed in chronological order from right to left and each one was provided with a distinctive physiognomy. The now lost images of Israelite Kings belonging to the same sequence were marked with crowns and shields, as remarked by Quaresmi.¹⁵⁹ The image of Joseph was probably shown as the last one, i.e. in the location closest to the choir and the cave entrances. Such a composition visually interacted with both the apse mosaic, displaying Jesus' mother flanked by his most important progenitors (Abraham and David), and the counter-façade, which was embellished with a most prominent image of the Tree of Jesse: from the flank of David's father sprouted a huge plant, whose branches housed both the Israelite prophets and Pagan wise people having announced the coming of the Messiah, namely Joel, Amos, Nahum, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Balaam, Micah, and the Eritrean Sybil.

Both the genealogies and the Tree of Jesse laid emphasis on Christ's ancestry, which was viewed in its turn as a further witness to his humanity and messianic role, according to old prophecies. Both themes were basically alien to Byzantine tradition and their integration into the mosaic decoration bears indirect witness to the involvement of the local Latin clergy in the conception of the program. Indeed, the Tree of Jesse was a Western theme, which had by then started circulating especially in Northern Europe: probably the most elaborate – and celebrated – version was the one worked out by Abbot Suger, around 1140, for his church at Saint-Denis.¹⁶⁰ Anyway, the composition in Bethlehem included details rarely encountered in Latin imagery and is iconographically unique. Here as in the conciliar images, the adoption of unusual, even unconventional features was an outcome of the very specific context where these same images were set on display. The inclusion of the Eritrean Sybil, for example, was unprecedented,

yet its function was to introduce a specific visual hint at Christmas office according to the Latin rite, when her vaticination of the Last Judgment, as we learn from some liturgical manuscripts of the Holy Sepulchre, was publicly sung. On the same occasion the performance included readings corresponding to the major themes represented in the mosaics: namely the *Liber generationis* of Mary and Jesus and the hymn that praised the Virgin as “the shoot of Jesse” (*O Maria Jesse virgam*).¹⁶¹

On the whole, in analyzing the nave mosaics, we are faced with something thoroughly unprecedented, which probably explains why scholars were often puzzled and unable to view it as a coherent program. Indeed, the mosaics displayed a multifarious and complex combination of forms and themes associated with different traditions, which could be read on many different levels. For most pilgrims, they probably looked just like a lavish decoration rivaling the beauty of the *Templum Domini*. Some of them, the more cultivated, could recognize some particular images and figure out that the full story of the Old and New Testament was represented there, as later visitors often remarked.¹⁶² By contrast, only a very select audience could grasp the ecclesiological and liturgical subtleties underlying the different images. The nearby display of themes associated with both Byzantine-Melkite and Latin doctrinal issues can be explained only by postulating a strict collaboration between the Orthodox and Frankish clergy in the conception of the mosaics.

¹⁵⁹ Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 646.

¹⁶⁰ Watson 1934; Grodecki 1976, pp. 71–80; Giani Gallino 1996; Piazza 2012.

¹⁶¹ Castiñeiras 2014; Piazza 2014, pp. 212–213; Castiñeiras 2015, pp. 193–199.

¹⁶² Bacci 2015, p. 42.

Unusually enough, no narrative image was shown in the nave, whereas a rather analytic cycle of Christological scenes was displayed in the sanctuary and transepts. Also in this case, our main source of information is Quaresmi's 1639 description, given that only fragments, albeit significant enough, are preserved in the east walls of the north and south transepts.¹⁶³ Quaresmi's text can be partly integrated with details provided by pilgrims' travelogues. In general terms, it can be said that this peculiar setting suited the experience of visitors, who went across the nave to access the south transept: there they were reminded of the full story of Christ's Incarnation, just before entering the holy cave. After making their devotions, they went upstairs to the north transept, where the mosaics displaying the Passion and Resurrection events visualized the final accomplishment of the Son of God's sacrifice and redemption of mankind.

The scenes of Christ's life did not thoroughly follow a chronological order: some images deemed to be more important in that specific context were given a special visual emphasis regardless of their coming earlier or later in the sequence provided by the Gospel narratives. So, for example, the apse icon with Mary between Abraham and David was framed by an image of the Annunciation displayed on the triumphal arch close-by. This corresponded roughly to the standard location of this image in the décor of mid-Byzantine painted churches. The following image in the sequence – the Nativity – was not displayed close to the latter: rather, it occupied the south conch, the one which had been formerly used as the "Mihrāb of 'Umar" and a visual focus for Islamic prayer toward Mecca. Unlike in standard Byzantine iconography, the scene displaying Christ's birth was separated by the Adoration of the Magi, represented on the arch above the apse. The choice of this particular location was an outcome of the specific dynamics

of access to the holy cave. As witnessed by Theoderic (ca. 1169), twelfth-century pilgrims, like modern ones, were accustomed to enter the underground space through the stairway in the south transept.¹⁶⁴ The monumental images recorded the two events commemorated underneath and worked as important orientation marks in the believers' gradual approach to the hallowed site they were longing to see.

The other scenes were arranged in a more or less chronological order. The east wall of the sanctuary displayed, from right to left, the last and the fourth episodes of the cycle. The location of the Dormition of the Virgin close to the monumental Marian icon in the apse was undoubtedly instrumental in laying emphasis on the fundamental role of Mary. The nearby Presentation in the Temple, in its turn, probably owed its display in the sanctuary to its interpretation as an allegory of the Eucharistic oblation. It can be assumed that the narrative proceeded on the upper portion of wall with the Baptism and another episode of Christ's public life. Then the story went further on the east wall of the south transept, on the upper section of which Quaresmi was still able to see Christ and the Samaritan Woman, followed by the image of Mary's father, Joachim. The insertion of an iconic element in a narrative cycle was due, in this case, to the need to fill the narrow space between a window and the nearby wall. It can be reasonably assumed that Mary's mother, Anna, was displayed in the corresponding location on the opposite, western wall.

The Transfiguration and Entry into Jerusalem are the only scenes to have survived in this area, albeit in a fragmentary state, on the lower portion of wall. Of the former, only one figure can still be discerned |FIG. 54|. It is one of the apostles who,

163 Quaresmi 1639, II, pp. 672–673. Cf. Kühnel 1987, pp. 138–140.

164 Theoderic [ca. 1169], ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179.



according to the Gospels, were testimonies to the first revelation of Jesus' divine nature. Even if the far-left position is normally attributed to James in this scheme, the specific physiognomy adopted (that of an aged man with grayish, roundish beard and hair composed of a number of iterated tufts) makes the identification with Peter more likely. The latter's astonishment at the incommensurable light emanating from Christ's body and his inconsequent proposal to erect tents for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, find an efficacious expression in his pose with raised arm, uncovered leg, and anguished face. The scene is set in a mountainous landscape, which, like the Paradisiacal meadows in the angels' images in the nave, is dotted with plants and trees. The two feet resting on the top of the mountain are all that remains of the figure of Moses.

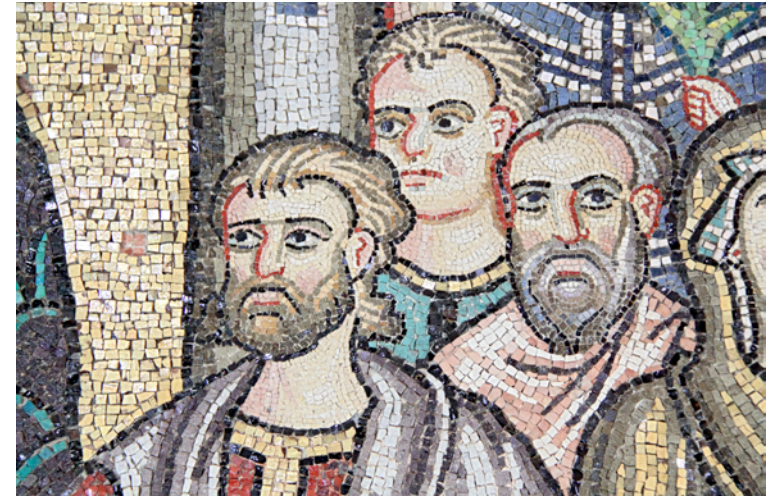
To the right of this scene is a large composition showing the Entry into Jerusalem. Christ, accompanied by Peter, is shown riding the donkey in an almost frontal pose and wearing a mantle enriched with golden chrysography. His body looks out of proportion, with a bust being much higher than his legs, but it is likely that this incongruence was deliberately introduced by the artists: such devices were not infrequently used by contemporary mosaicists to correct the optical distortion which was experienced by all beholders looking from below. Also intended to impress viewers was the use of downward-sloping tesserae in Christ's and Peter's haloes: the reflections of light they produced enabled beholders to address their attention to the most important figures in the scene, which was staged in a hilly landscape. Two children are shown spreading garments below the donkey's hooves, whereas two more are climbing a palm and cutting off branches. A joyful crowd welcomes Jesus on the threshold of the Jerusalem Golden Gate [FIG. 56]. Most notably, the latter's cityscape [FIG. 55] is evoked with much accuracy: prominent is the Anastasis Rotunda with its large oculus, shown close to a domed building which probably corresponds to the *Templum*



55 | View of Jerusalem, detail from the Entry into Jerusalem, mosaic, east wall of the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

Domini. The marble canopy topped with a cross and located on the left corner of the walls can tentatively be identified as the “Dome of the Chain”, the arcaded structure located close to the Dome of the Rock and worshipped by the Latins as the site of Saint James the Less’ martyrdom by being pushed down from the pinnacle of the Temple.¹⁶⁵

Below the two scenes runs an ornamental band displaying alternating roundels and lozenges on the upper border and a red indentation on the lower one: both are in keeping with the ornamental repertoire used also on the north wall of the nave. In-between FIG. 54 the band is embellished with a much geometrized vegetal motif, rendered in gold with mother-of-pearl inlays on a green background. Even if it looks Islamic, it hardly finds an exact parallel in the repertoire of forms of contemporary or earlier Islamic decoration. It can be wondered whether this solution was once more meant to rival, albeit in much fanciful way, the sumptuous ornaments displayed in the Lord’s Temple and in other important monuments of Crusader Jerusalem.



56 | The People of Jerusalem, detail of the Entry into Jerusalem, mosaic, east wall of the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

The sequence followed on the western wall of the south transept. Given that Quaresmi was still able to see the Capture of Jesus on the lower row below the windows, it can be assumed that such events as the Last Supper or the Prayer in Gethsemane were displayed on the upper section. Nothing is known of what followed on the west wall of the north transept, but it can be assumed that more events of the Passion, presumably the Crucifixion accompanied by the Descent from the Cross and the Lamentation, were displayed there. The Spanish pilgrim Pedro Escobar Cabeza de Vaca, who visited the church in 1587, described and praised the mosaic image of Christ’s death on the cross, though without providing details as to its exact location. The text made clear, anyway, that it was part of a Passion cycle and stood out for its dramatic efficaciousness: the author was namely impressed by the visual emphasis on the blood pouring out of Christ’s body and the violent gesture of Longinus stabbing the Lord with a lance. This latter

165 Pringle 1993–2009, III, pp. 182–185.

figure was qualified as that of a “Pharisee”: this remark was perhaps elicited by the soldier’s representation close to the Good Centurion, who, according to Byzantine conventions, usually wore Jewish, Oriental-like garments evocative of his alleged status as a Pharisee.¹⁶⁶ Most notably, Cabeza de Vaca observed that the Passion cycle included also an isolated, icon-like image of Saint Helena holding the cross: it can be assumed that, not unlike Joachim and Anna in the south transept, this figure was displayed on the small portion of wall to the right of the northernmost window.¹⁶⁷ The display of Helena in this context had multiple meanings: as discoverer of the True Cross, she was obviously associated with the Crucifixion, and at the same time she was unanimously praised as founder of the Bethlehem church. Her standard Byzantine image, which could be seen also in the mosaics of the Golgotha Chapel in Jerusalem,¹⁶⁸ showed her and Constantine to both sides of the cross. In this case, she was represented alone, even if the image of her son may have worked as her visual pendant in the corresponding location on the eastern wall of the south transept.

The display of the *Anastasis* in the north conch is highly probable: even if it had already disappeared by Quaresmi’s times, its presence in the mosaic program is confirmed by a sixteenth-century Greek *proskynetarion*, or guide-book for pilgrims.¹⁶⁹ The east wall of the north transept still preserves large remnants of mosaics on its lower row. The Incredulity of Thomas has lost only its upper section, which probably extended up to the window and displayed the roofing of the architectural structure within which the Resurrected Christ’s apparition to His disciples takes place. The lower edges of a luxuriously embroidered textile hang over the inner arcades to both sides of the central door **FIG. 59**: they can be recognized as remnants of the curtains or *velaria* which were frequently used in architectural images as ornaments for domes, balconies and baldachins. The arcades supported by marble columns of different colors give shape

to a classicizing building, the most impressive feature of which is undoubtedly the elegantly coffered, slightly inward-swinging double door, embellished with gold striations and mother-of-pearl inlays. It is set within a perfectly rectangular green frame decorated with heart-shaped, golden motifs, and the inscription PAX VOBIS on the top.

Christ **FIG. 57** is represented in the very center, against the half-opened door, in a sort of icon-like setting that separates him from the two groups of respectively six and five disciples represented under the arcades. He pulls Thomas by the wrist, forcing him to touch the wound with his index finger. The doubtful apostle is shown in profile and bending toward His master: he intrudes into Christ’s space with his arms, part of the face and one leg, yet most of his body is represented out of the frame, in such a way as to provide the figure with a more hesitant attitude. The nearby Latin inscription (INFER DIGITUM HUC, “put your finger here”) makes clear that Jesus speaks to Thomas in a peremptory tone. Accordingly, the other figures close-by are provided with facial expressions that reveal their anguish and surprise **FIG. 58**. The peculiar version of the Incredulity set on display in the mosaic was first worked out in the arts of early Christian Palestine and never enjoyed a big success until its rediscovery in the arts of Arab Christian communities during the Crusader period. A number of twelfth- and thirteenth-century works, including pilgrims’ tokens and book illuminations, made use of this same compositional type and, at least in some cases, it can be argued that they may have been directly inspired by the Bethlehem mosaic.¹⁷⁰

166 Xyngopoulos 1960–1961.

167 Escobar Cabeza de Vaca 1594, pp. 128v–129r.

168 As witnessed by Elzear Horn [1721], ed. Hoade/Bagatti 1962, p. 121.

169 Kadas 1986, pp. 253, 287.

170 Christoforaki 2000; Doumato 2000; Hunt 2009, pp. 332–333.



57 | Christ pulls Thomas by the wrist, detail of the Incredulity of Thomas, mosaic, east wall of the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169



58 | Figures of disciples, detail of the Incredulity of Thomas, mosaic, east wall of the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

Close-by is a large fragment of the Ascension scene, displaying the Virgin Mary in a three-quarter orant pose between two angels, flanked by two groups of apostles, who raise their heads and gesticulate to manifest their astonishment [FIG. 60](#). The disciples' upheaval is evoked, in both images, by means of visual conventions being distinctive of contemporary Byzantine art: namely the repeated display of wrinkled foreheads and S-shaped, downward sloping eyebrows. Other features corresponding to contemporary painterly conventions are the aquiline noses, the rendering of hair with parallel thick lines of alternating shades, and the draperies rolling up around the individual body parts with circular, V-shaped, and zigzag folds. Such formulae are recognized by art historians as hallmarks of the last phase of Comnenian painting at the end of the twelfth century, also known as “dynamic style”, and should therefore be regarded as anticipating features which were to become commonplace in the following decades. Scholars have also remarked their distinctiveness vis-à-vis both the rendering of draperies in the mosaics of the south transept and in the angels' row on the north wall of the central nave, which stand out for their strong, gently curving outlines. In general, also the physiognomic features of human figures are rendered in a somewhat more linear way in the south transept, where the proportions of the bodies seem to be more classicizing in character.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which such slight differences may be due either to the peculiar “style” of each of the artists belonging to Ephraim's atelier or to intentional choices associated with specific communicative strategies: how can we be sure that more “dynamic” features were not selected because they contributed better than the more monumental solutions adopted in the Entry into Jerusalem to enhance the dramatic tone

171 Kühnel B. 1994, pp. 56–57; Folda 1995, p. 363; Kühnel 1999, p. 210.



59 | Architectural detail, from the Incredulity of Thomas, mosaic, east wall of the north transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

of the Incredulity and the Ascension? Is it possible that the same artists made use of different modeling techniques and more complex draperies depending on the more or less participatory and emotionally charged reaction they wanted to arouse in their audience?

Indeed, stylistic analysis provides no firm grounds on which to ascertain if the authors were all Arab Christians, like Basil, or local Greeks or Byzantines from Constantinople. Perhaps some purely technical details can be regarded as more directly reflecting each artist's specific *know-how*. Throughout the program, faces, hands, and feet are composed of smaller tesserae (ca 350 per dm² vis-à-vis between 100 and 150 per dm² used for garments, landscapes, and golden grounds).¹⁷² This enabled artists to introduce different shades of color to enlighten the most prominent facial features and create different shading devices. Some of them are identical in all mosaics and conform to Byzantine praxis: so for example deep red tesserae mark the outer outline of noses, the upper eyelids, and the fork of the ear's antihelix, whereas pink ones are used not only to highlight cheeks, but also to shade foreheads, chins, and necks.

By contrast, other small details are rendered in distinctive ways: the artists working in the south transept render the sidewalls and bridges of noses in light grey or brown color [FIG. 56], whereas cadet blue to cyan tones are used in the Incredulity and Ascension [FIG. 58]. Moreover, many of the figures in the north transept display a rather distinctive feature, which is not encountered in the other extant mosaics: namely the small red tessera marking the drains of the eye's tear duct.

The latter feature is a sort of hallmark of Byzantine mosaic technique: it occurs, for example, in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo in association with those figures which can be more firmly credited with the authorship of Constantinopolitan masters.¹⁷³ This may therefore indicate that the author of the mosaics in the north transept was somebody who had been trained in the Byzantine capital or was very well acquainted with contemporary techniques in Constantinople's ateliers: the team's head, master Ephraim, is the most obvious candidate for this role. We can suppose that he was responsible for most of the mosaics, and especially of the human faces, in that area as well as in the bema, the north wall of which displayed a further scene, the Pentecost. Possibly, another, somewhat less sophisticated collaborator dealt with the decoration of the south transept, whereas the nave, as far as we can infer, was largely the work of the Arab Christian master Basil.

In any case, the local component was strong enough to exert a strong impact even on the program of the east end. This is made evident especially by the use of decorated frames and ornamental bands. The fragment of a multicolored, geometric interlace can still be seen on the lower portion of wall on the north side of the bema [FIG. 61]. In their turn, the Incredulity and the Ascension are

172 I owe this information to Susanna Sarmati.

173 Brenk 2010, pp. 59–62; Brenk 2013, p. 245.



60 | Group of Apostles, detail of the Ascension, mosaic, east wall of the north transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

separated by a vertical line | FIG. 62 | displaying golden and red lozenges, which are substituted in the horizontal, lower frame by two rows of symmetrically disposed v-shaped, stepped motifs made of red, golden and grey tesserae. The apostles' feet often intrude into the ornamental space, so creating a dynamic relation between the narratives and their framing devices. Underneath is a larger band composed of two superimposed ranges of triangular shapes, richly embellished with red, green, blue and violet patterns and circular, lozenge- and tear-shaped mother-of-pearl inlays. They alternate with fleshy, spiky, and multicolored acanthus leaves symmetrically arranged to their sides. Finally, the lower border is decorated with a red dentellation.

Such a profusion of ornaments betrays a strong fascination for Islamic or Islamizing motifs which was by then a characteristic of the arts practiced by the Melkite communities of the Holy Land under Crusader rule. A rather close parallel is provided by the mid-twelfth-century enamels of an icon of Christ now in the Museum of the Greek Patriarchate in Jerusalem: the latter's quadrilobes and roundels with rosettes compare with the analogous motifs displayed in the row of synods on the north wall of the central nave, whereas the lozenge patterns on the frame and the foliage in Christ's halo are much akin to, respectively, the vertical frame separating the two scenes in the north transept and the fleshy leaves on the ornamental band on the opposite side.¹⁷⁴ It must be stressed, anyway, that such ornaments as the dentelated lozenges are found also in works, such as the bookbinding of Queen Melisende's *Psalter*, which were more clearly meant for Latin donors.¹⁷⁵ Apparently, the combination of forms associated with specific artistic traditions was transconfessionally regarded as

174 Hetherington 1990; Hunt 1995, p. 85.

175 Folda 1995, p. 156.



61 | Geometric interlaces, mosaic, north wall of the bema, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

an efficacious way to enhance the aesthetic – and sacral – worthiness of material things involved in ritual and devotional practices.

EMBELLISHING THE HOLY CAVE

In general, this profusion of both aniconic and figurative décors gave shape to an artificial space evocative of the Paradisiacal, “meta-human” dimension. It was instrumental to the performance of liturgical rites (and more specifically those of Christmastime) and laid a very special emphasis on the theological truth of the Son of God’s Incarnation, announced by the Prophets and achieved by His death on the cross and Resurrection. It was meant as a liminal space introducing visitors to the experience of the holy site located underground, which Christ had chosen as His terrestrial abode and was still marked with the very spots hallowed by contact with His “theandric”, both human and divine, body.

Efforts were made to create a symmetrical relation between the upper sacred space and the Nativity grotto. It was probably in



62 | Double row of triangular motifs alternating with acanthus leaves, mosaic, east wall of the north transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

this period that the latter was provided with an artificial western extension, the approximately rectangular shape of which made it look much like a church nave. The already existing eastern niche, housing an altar supported by four colonnettes and the portion of marble floor with the hole of Christ’s birthplace, was provided with a mosaic displaying the Nativity (FIG. 63) in its hemispheric conch, working as a sort of diminutive apse. Possibly, the mosaic was modeled on an earlier one dating from Byzantine times, yet what remains today is in keeping with the Comnenian features observed in the narrative scenes of the transepts and should therefore be dated more or less to the same period, i.e. in the third quarter of the twelfth century – perhaps some time earlier than the décor in the upper church, if we assume that works must have begun with the most eminent part of the complex.¹⁷⁶

The choice of a narrative image for a display in the conch is hardly surprising: it aimed to visualize the holy event commemorated

176 Hamilton 1947, pp. 86–88; Folda 1995, pp. 371–378.



63 | Nativity, mosaic, Nativity cave, Bethlehem, ca. 1167–1169

and worshipped on the spot underneath. The scene was represented according to contemporary Byzantine conventions: Mary was shown lying on her bed within the cave, close to the manger, rendered as a masonry structure with three holes. This solution possibly took inspiration from the specific setting of the actual spot of the manger, which is known to have been covered with a slab with one or more holes enabling pilgrims to kiss the soil, but also, and perhaps more probably, from Christ's and Mary's sarcophagi in their tombs in Jerusalem, which were provided with three openings. Emphasis was therefore laid on the rhetorical parallelism of Jesus' birth with His death, which also led, as mentioned above, to describe the stone covering the manger as originally belonging to Christ's sepulcher. The other actors of the scene were displayed close to or around the central composition: the two nurses Salome and Zelome washing the Child to the right, the thoughtful Joseph and the Magi to the left, a number of angels on the top of the hill housing the cave, and shepherds with their animals on the latter's right slope.

The Greek pilgrim John Phokas was much delighted to see how efficaciously this image reminded visitors of the sacred mysteries which took place in the cave. The description he made of it is probably one of the longest known *ekphraseis* of a Byzantine artwork. He praised the artist's skillfulness and remarked that Mary was represented in a very relaxed pose and facial expression, in such a way as to suggest that "she had been spared the pains of nature". He also admired the ways in which the shepherds reacted to the angel's announcement:

They stretch their hands towards heaven, turning to listen in the direction of the singing, and all standing in different attitudes so that each one can hear more easily and stand up without difficulty. To some their crooks seem useless now, and for others their gaze is directed to the sky. They draw back their hands as if they were throwing something, and thus extend their capacity for hearing from all sides...

These words reveal that John perceived the image as rendered in a very lively way, with animated postures and gestures, in keeping with contemporary Comnenian painting and with the solutions employed in the decoration of the upper church, especially in the north transept. He even noticed a further detail: whereas the sheep of the shepherds' flocks were represented in such a way that they did not seem to care about the angel's apparition, a different attitude was attributed to the bitch, "the animal which is fierce to strangers", which "seems to notice that the vision is unusual".¹⁷⁷

The mosaic was accordingly attributed extraordinary expressive qualities, even if they are admittedly at some variance with the compositional details of the image and may have taken more

177 John Phokas, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 957–960. English translation after Wilkinson 1988, pp. 333–334.

direct inspiration from such famous *ekphraseis* as Choricus' description of the Nativity image in Gaza Cathedral.¹⁷⁸ In any case, it is significant that Phokas chose this specific image, set in a very distinctive context, as the object of his rhetorical exercise. Unfortunately most of it was obliterated in relatively recent times: if fragments of the shepherds, angels, and Magi could still be seen in the 1940s, what is left now – after repeated damage, lastly in a 2014 fire – is reduced to the lower part of the Virgin's body, the manger, and part of one of nurses. Still visible is also a large fragment of the original Latin inscription set on a silver background, which runs:

*[Gloria in excelsis Deo et]
in [terr]a pax homibus bon[e voluntatis],*

a quote from Luke (2, 14) regularly used in Christmas rites. It was originally followed by two more verses that laid emphasis, once more, on the centrality of the Incarnation dogma:

*Angelicae lumen virtutis et eius acumen
Hic natus vere Deus est de virgine Matre.
The true God, light of angelic virtue and perfection,
Was born here from a virgin mother.*¹⁷⁹

The mosaic extended also to the vault of the main cave, as is indicated by some extant traces of bedding on its westernmost part and especially by the witness of several pilgrims. Perhaps they were at least partly remnants of the earlier decoration that was still seen by Daniel at the beginnings of the twelfth century. Anyway, from the early sixteenth-century description by the Englishman Richard Guylford, who could still recognize “dyuers storyes”, we can infer that the program included narrative scenes, presumably

of Christ's infancy, which would be probably more in keeping with twelfth-century patterns of church decoration.¹⁸⁰ Other visitors simply remarked that such ornaments contributed significantly to the dignity and solemnity, or aesthetic appeal, of the holy place.¹⁸¹ Seventeenth-century sources also mentioned a mosaic image of the Virgin Mary between Saint Catherine and Saint Ursula displayed on the Western wall of the grotto.¹⁸² Additionally, the holy cave was given a very precious appearance by its marble revetments, which probably dated back to the sixth century and were of an elegant grayish-white color.¹⁸³ In its turn, the floor was covered with a marble incrustation, as stated by the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land Francesco Suriano in the 1480s and later authors.¹⁸⁴

Finally, sources are silent about the décor of the lower southern grotto. Pilgrims remarked that one had to go down three steps to reach it and worship the site of Christ's manger. It is not known whether the altar mentioned by Bernhard the monk in the ninth century was still being used.¹⁸⁵ Later pilgrims mentioned the marble revetments of the holy place and remarked that the vault was of nude rock.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that some image, such as a painted icon of the Adoration of the Magi, may have been set on display close to the manger, in order to remind visitors of the holy event having taking place on that very spot.

178 Maguire 1974; Folda 1995, pp. 371–372.

179 John of Würzburg, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 85; Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179.

180 Richard Guylforde [1506], ed. Ellis 1851, p. 37.

181 Bacci 2015, p. 42.

182 Bremond 1669, part II, chapter 36, p. 4; Laffi 1683, p. 341; Nau 1757, p. 414. Cf. Bagatti 1952, pp. 124–125.

183 Farnad 1519, c. 19r.

184 Francesco Suriano, *Trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente*, ed. Golubovich 1900, p. 123; D'Aveyro 1593, p. 153v; Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 629.

185 See above, chapter 2.

186 Tobler 1849, p. 161; Bagatti 1952, pp. 120–121.



Protected by God: The Nativity Church from Saladin's Conquest to the Present Day

SALADIN, THE SECOND LATIN RULE (1229–1244),
AND A NEW PHASE OF PILGRIMAGE

In the course of a few decades the site-specific holiness that believers and pilgrims expected to experience in the ancient basilica marking Christ's birthplace was given a very peculiar and solemn *mise-en-scène*. The profusion of marble and mosaic ornaments helped realize visually the role of the holy cave as the site of the Son of God's first epiphany on earth, whereas the even larger display of precious décors in the upper church manifested the latter's function as a liturgical space where the mystery of God's Incarnation was daily re-enacted in the Eucharist. In no other Palestinian *locus sanctus* were pilgrims confronted with such a moving, efficacious, and compelling staging of the holy. The extraordinary beauty of the furnishings revealed the extraordinary worship-worthiness of the place and, indirectly, magnified the glory of the Christian church in general and, consequently, also of the Latin clergy ruling the church.



64 | Wooden intarsia displaying crosses and Armenian and Arabic inscriptions, Armenian door, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 1227

Ironically, this glory lasted only a short while. In 1187 Saladin recaptured Jerusalem and most of Palestine including Bethlehem and, again, the basilica suffered no damage, if one excepts the removal and destruction of its bells.¹ Nevertheless, the Latin Bishop and his canons were forced to take up residence in Crusader-ruled territories and, in 1191, in the neighborhood of Montmusard close to Acre, which served as capital in exile of the Latin Kingdom until 1291.² The Greek-Melkite clergy was granted the right to serve in the church, yet similar concessions were given almost immediately also to other Christian denominations. Among them, the Armenians obtained some special privileges, given that they were allowed to embellish the old sixth-century entrance from the narthex into the central nave with an elegantly carved wooden door [FIG. 64]. The latter is now only partly preserved and hangs from the upper frame. In accordance with Armenian practice, which displayed crosses – and more specifically stone *khač'kars* – on or close to the outer and inner façades of churches, the door is decorated with two couples of crosses of different shape, flanked by stylized plants. They are

included within rectangular panels and located on the upper portion of the door, whereas the rest is carved with Islamicizing arabesques and spirals.³ Two inscriptions, one in Arabic and the other in Armenian, respectively recorded that the work was finished in the year 624 H. (1227) during the rule of the Sultan of Damascus al-Malik al-Mu'azzam (Saladin's nephew) and was due to the efforts of two monks, Father Abraham and Father Arakel, in the times of King Het'um I (Het'own) of Cilicia (1224–1269). Mention of the latter probably indicates that the renovation of the door was due to the Armenian sovereign's direct patronage and that he was by then on good terms with the Ayyubid court of Cairo.⁴ The diffusion of contemporary Cilician miniatures of fanciful ornaments which seem to be inspired by the Bethlehem mosaics bears further witness to the Armenians' connection with the Nativity church.⁵

As elsewhere in Palestine, the Sultan did not allow the Greek Church to step back into the hegemonic role it had had before the Crusader conquest. Emperor Isaac II Angelos' attempts to re-establish the previous rights of the Byzantine-Melkite Church had no significant outcome and even the return of the Greek patriarch was not immediate.⁶ On the other hand, special privileges were given to other groups: Georgians, for example, reinforced their presence thanks to their special connections to the Mamluks, the powerful military caste of Egypt which was mostly composed of slaves of Caucasian origins, and the direct engagement of Queen Thamar (1184–1212).⁷ The Coptic church of Egypt also managed

1 Themelis 1923, p. 389; Chéneau 1923, p. 603.

2 Lagenissière 1872, pp. 51–52; Jacoby 2001, pp. 115–116; Pringle 1993–2009, IV, pp. 42–44.

3 Jacoby 1990, pp. 126–134.

4 Vincent/Abel 1914, pp. 184–185; Hamilton 1947, pp. 48–49; Hintlian 1989, pp. 42–43; Stone 1981; Stone 1984; Sharon 1999–2013, II, pp. 184–187; Mutaftian 2004, p. 139; Mutaftian 2012, p. 713.

5 Euw 1997, pp. 73–74.


6 Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], pp. 354–355; Rose 1992, pp. 239–242; Pahlitzsch 2001, pp. 245–246.

7 Rose 1992, pp. 243–244.

to establish its presence in the most important holy places.⁸ Indeed, even the Latins were soon allowed to perform their rites: already in 1192, at the request of Bishop Hubert Walther of Salisbury, Saladin consented to the reintroduction of two Western priests in Bethlehem.⁹ In order to be admitted to the church, pilgrims were supposed to pay the toll to the Muslim guards stationed in front of the entrance.¹⁰ Once again, Bethlehem had been spared destruction and the site came to be regarded as being especially privileged by God. According to the Cistercian chronicler Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, writing ca. 1232–1241, the Nativity church was one of the three shrines which “defended themselves miraculously” against destruction by Muslims: that of Bethlehem, that of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, and that of Saidnaya, in Syria.¹¹

In 1229 Emperor Frederic II signed an agreement with Sultan al-Kamil, which led to the restitution of the Holy Places to the Crusaders. Indeed, this was a sensational diplomatic victory, which was nevertheless criticized by many Western, especially ecclesiastical, observers as an unsatisfying compromise or even as a pact with the devil. In his letter to the Pope, the Latin patriarch Gerold was irritated enough to point out that one of the provisions stated, without further qualifications, that Muslims were not to be prevented from going on pilgrimage to Bethlehem. The same right was also granted to Christians who wanted to visit the Ḥaram eš-Šarif, on condition, nevertheless, that they sincerely believed in the holiness of the sites: if this was not the case, they could be rejected. In the eyes of many people, it was unacceptable that “Saracens” might freely enter and pray in the Nativity church according to their own habits, whereas Christians were requested to prove their true belief according to criteria unclearly defined.¹²

In any case, it is very likely that, in this new political frame, the chapter of Bethlehem canons, if not the Latin bishop, returned to its church. It seems evident that a number of furnishings and

vessels from the twelfth and thirteenth century, unearthed during works in the Franciscan convent in 1863 and on the site of the present-day Casanova hostel in 1906, were concealed underground by the Latin clergy at some time to preserve them from destruction.¹³ Such objects, presently preserved in the Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem, include the top of a silver crosier decorated with enamels of Limoges,¹⁴ two silver candlesticks bearing the inscription “Cursed be he who removes me from the place of the Holy Nativity, Bethlehem”,¹⁵ three other enameled candlesticks,¹⁶ two bronze bowls with scenes from the Life of Saint Thomas (also of Limosin production),¹⁷ three bells and pieces from a carillon. The latter is especially important because it is one of the earliest and best-preserved examples of a medieval organ known to us. It includes up to 251 copper pipes  and thirteen small bells of different shape and size, corresponding to the *cymbals* mentioned in medieval sources and more specifically in Theophilus’ twelfth-century *De diversis artibus*. Originally the structure was connected to a keyboard and a set of bellows providing it with pressurized air.¹⁸

8 Meinardus 1995.

9 Richard the Canon, *Itinerarium Ricardi*, 6:34, ed. Stubbs 1864, pp. 438–439. Cf. Riant 1889–1896, I, p. 31.

10 Thietmar [1217], ed. Tobler 1851, p. 21.

11 Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, *Chronicon*, ed. Scheffer-Boichorst 1874, pp. 935–936.

12 Gerold of Jerusalem, *Letter to Pope Gregory IX*, February 29th, 1229, ed. Pertz/Rodenberg 1883, I, pp. 297–298.

13 Bagatti 1952, pp. 72–73.

14 Enlart 1925–1928, I, p. 196; Bagatti 1939, p. 50; Bagatti 1952, pp. 112–113; Di Napoli 2000, p. 252.

15 Enlart 1925–1928, I, pp. 193–194; Bagatti 1939, pp. 50–51; Bagatti 1952, p. 113; Di Napoli 2000, p. 252.

16 Enlart 1925–1928, I, p. 194–195; Bagatti 1939, p. 50; Bagatti 1952, p. 113; Di Napoli 2000, p. 252.

17 Dalton 1922; Enlart 1925, I, pp. 187–193; Bagatti 1939, pp. 51–53; Bagatti 1952, pp. 106–112; Di Napoli 2000, pp. 252–253.

18 Chéneau 1923; Bagatti 1952, p. 113; Williams 1993, pp. 348–349; Castiñeiras 2014, pp. 65–71; Di Napoli 2000, p. 253.

There is no agreement as to the dating of the Bethlehem organ, but it seems unlikely that one such object, including bells, may have survived the general destruction of bells in the aftermath of Saladin's conquest. Therefore, it is perhaps more logical to assume that the carillon was the most remarkable addition to the church setting made by the regular canons in the thirteenth century. Indeed, the setting of an object that had become by then a marker of special dignity for the most eminent churches was obviously not deprived of political symbolism, given that it so efficaciously reasserted the importance of the Latin rite. The choice of performing the liturgy with musical accompaniment laid emphasis on Western distinctiveness vis-à-vis the other Christian groups and indirectly on the Latin Church's authority and rightful ownership of Christ's birthplace. One of the cymbals bore the inscription *vox Domini*, "God's voice": it has been suggested that it was meant to remind viewers of the use of the organ, at its maximum sound power, in the most solemn rites, and more specifically in the singing of the hymn *Iudicium Signum*, which evoked the Final Judgment on Christmas Eve.¹⁹

Notwithstanding this engagement in enhancing the attractiveness of the liturgy, it is very likely that part of the Latin clergy, including the Bishop, were based in their new see in Acre. There was kept the treasury of the church, which included important relics, such as a nail of Christ's crucifixion and the pincers used by Nicodemus for the descent of Christ's body from the cross, as well as an arm of the Apostle Thomas.²⁰ Apparently, the collection was enriched with items from the booty of holy mementoes summoned up by the Crusaders during the sack of Constantinople in 1204.²¹ On that occasion, the Bishop of Bethlehem Raynerius had laid claims on the famous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, which was believed to be an authentic portrait of Mary by the hand of the Evangelist Luke.²² Probably Raynerius considered himself, on account of his association with the most important Marian church



65 | Pipes of an organ, Bethlehem, 13th century / Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem

in the Christian world, as the legitimate owner of that precious and outstandingly worship-worthy image. When the image was appropriated by the Venetians, he complained to Pope Honorius III about the injustice, but to no purpose. In the times of Bishop Giovanni Romano (ca. 1238–1245) most of the relics were pawned or perhaps even sold to the Templars and Hospitallers in Acre: this led to a fierce controversy among the Latin clergy which came to an end only with recovery of the treasury by the Papal legate Godfrey de Prefectis in August 1245.²³

Meanwhile, on 25 April 1244 the basilica was devastated by the Khwarezmian Turks, who put an end to the short-lived second period of Latin rule in Bethlehem and the other Holy Places. It is highly likely that the most precious church vessels and the carillon

19 Castiñeiras 2014, pp. 76–77.

20 Pringle 1993–2009, I, p. 155.

21 Riant 1885.

22 Honorius III, *Letter to the Doge of Venice* [1204], ed. Tautu 1950, pp. 187–188.

23 Claverie 1999.

were concealed underground on the eve of this incursion. Nevertheless, Latin priests did not leave until they were finally expelled by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in 1266. According to some sources, the latter damaged or partly destroyed the monastery of the regular canons.²⁴ It is also possible that attempts were made, in this same period, to despoil the Nativity building of some of its precious ornaments. In 1283, Burchard of Mount Sion reported that a Sultan of Cairo, probably Baybars himself, gave orders to remove the white marble slabs from the church walls to embellish one of his residences, but was prevented by the miraculous appearance of an enormous snake: visible traces of the latter's passage were imprinted on the slabs themselves.²⁵ Indeed, in the course of time all of the marble revetments came to be removed: the deep and continuous horizontal fissures (FIG. 66), which can still be seen on the nave walls and were evidently produced by the pressure exerted by the metal tools used to detach the ancient slabs, probably provided the most immediate source of inspiration for this odd story.

In the early Mamluk period, the church came to be increasingly used as a shared space for prayer and liturgical performance by different Christian denominations. In 1335, the Italian pilgrim James of Verona described the major celebrations taking place, almost simultaneously, on the Eve of Mary's Ascension (August 15): according to him, the Greeks officiated on the main altar, and the Latin pilgrims in the cave close to the Holy Manger, whereas the north transept was reserved for Ethiopians, Nubians, and Nestorians and the south one for the Jacobites or Syrian Orthodox. Two more altars, located in the nave and leaning on the choir screen, were used by the Maronites and Georgians. The spectacle was most impressive:

Oh God! – observed James – what a joy it was to hear so many sounds praising God and the glorious Virgin. And the church was full with people everywhere.²⁶



66 | Fissure caused by the removal of the marble plaques, south wall of the nave, Nativity church, Bethlehem

The mention of the three altars in the north transept is especially interesting: given that the latter was associated with the commemoration of the arrival of the Magi, who were considered to be of Indian or African origins, it is perhaps not by chance that this area was reserved for the Nestorians (whose presence extended from Mesopotamia to India and beyond) as well as Nubians and Ethiopians. The Nubians (i.e. the Muslim-ruled Christians of Lower Egypt and Sudan) were very soon replaced by the Copts, whereas the Ethiopians are known to have maintained their altar at least until the sixteenth century.²⁷ According to a nineteenth-century source relying on earlier texts some of their monks had established their cells in or nearby the narthex of the basilica.²⁸

The available evidence indicates that, in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the village was mostly deserted and the Nativity

24 Marin Sanudo, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*, ed. Bongars 1611, p. 221.

25 Burchardus de Monte Sion, *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, iv, pp. 196–198. Cf. Tobler 1849, pp. 87–88; Bagatti 1952, p. 58.

26 James of Verona [1335], ed. Monneret de Villard 1950, p. 61.

27 Cerulli 1943, i, pp. 112–113, 374–375.

28 Neophytos of Cyprus, Ὑπόμνημα, ed. Papadopoulos-Keramevs 1891–1898, II, pp. 408–409; Papadopoulos 1900, p. 39; Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], p. 355.



67 | Remnants of the medieval chapel of Saint Catherine, annexed to the north transept, Franciscan convent, Bethlehem

church was sometimes said to be surrounded by trees.²⁹ To the south of the basilica, twelfth-century pilgrims had already mentioned a small church, originally belonging to a Greek monastery of Saint Nicholas, erected over a grotto and viewed as the place where the Holy Family had briefly sojourned before leaving Palestine for Egypt. The building came to be regarded by Western visitors as the ancient cenoby where Paula and Eustochium spent their days. Many of them, starting with the pseudo-Hegesippus in the first half of the twelfth century, also reported that the tombs of Paula and Eustochium were located there.³⁰ Sometimes in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, for some reason now unclear, the nearby monastery was abandoned by the Greeks (who had probably settled by then in the ancient tower to the south of the basilica) and in 1375 the Franciscans asked for papal authorization to erect their dwellings in the vicinity of the holy site.³¹

Already in the 1280s, the Minor Friar Philip of Savona reported that the still extant underground chapel was associated with an entirely unknown episode of Christ's infancy:

In the lower part of the abovementioned church there is a crypt which is a chapel. They say that, from time to time, [Mary] staid there with her only-begotten son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. And they also say that Our Lady sometimes pressed her breasts full with milk, which fell to the soil: therefore that earth was made so white, that you have the feeling to see milk. According to what is said, if, for some reason, a woman loses her milk, she puts some of that earth in a glass of water, drinks it, and immediately recovers her milk.³²

This was probably a local tradition that came to draw the attention of pilgrims and gradually gave shape to a new memorial site [FIG. 69]. It is likely that a cult-phenomenon connected with this place had already existed in the Crusader period, given that the Bishop of Bethlehem had owned a relic of the Virgin's milk, which may have been made out of the white earth of the grotto.³³ Nevertheless, the site was integrated into the local network of *loca sancta* only from the second half of the thirteenth century: indeed, even if some members of the clergy manifested their skepticism as to its authenticity,³⁴ the site undoubtedly added a new dimension to the pilgrims' experience, given that they could now obtain a most rewarding and precious relic merely by scraping some powder from the walls of the cave. Once mixed with water, the powder was transformed into one of the much praised holy liquids which

29 Innominatus III, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, III, p. 20; Philippe Mousket, *Cronique* [1242], ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, III, p. 490.

30 Pseudo-Hegesippus, *Tractatus*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 998; Burchard of Mount Sion, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, III, p. 198. In general on the Milk Grotto, cf. Tobler 1849, pp. 227–241; Bagatti 1952, pp. 245–247, 258–261; Kopp 1959, pp. 78–80; Pringle 1993–2009, I, pp. 156–157.

31 Letter of Gregory IX to the Guardian of Bethlehem Martin of Catalonia, 25 November 1375, ed. Golubovich 1906–1927, V, pp. 207–208.

32 Philip of Savona, *Liber peregrinationum* [ca. 1280–1289], ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, IV, p. 238.

33 Anonymous of Florennes, *Brevis narratio belli sacri* [ca. 1125], ed. *Recueil HO* 1844–1895, V, p. 373.

34 Giovanni di Fedanzola [ca. 1330–1335], ed. Nicolini [et al.] 2003, p. 114.



68 | Graffiti by West European pilgrims, Franciscan cloister, Bethlehem, 15th century



69 | The Milk Grotto, Bethlehem

visitors could appropriate in a number of holy sites, such as the balm of the tree hallowed by contact with Christ's clothes in the Matariyya garden in Cairo, or the oils pouring out of Saint Catherine's corpse in the Sinai monastery and the icon of the Virgin in Saidnaya near Damascus. Yet, in comparison to these, the holy liquid in Bethlehem was much more worship-worthy, given that it was produced miraculously in a site belonging to the *stricto sensu* Holy Land.

According to the earlier texts, the whole of the cave's soil had turned white like cheese or snow when it was sprinkled with drops of Mary's milk.³⁵ Since 1323, anyway, pilgrims make clear that the chromatic change had affected only a rocky pillar that they were used to name *lac sancte Marie*, that probably corresponded to that separating the main grotto from the inner cave.³⁶ The German Ludolf of Südheim saw there "a milk and liquid pouring out of a milk-coloured stone, mixed with some red": this chromatic ambiguity enabled pilgrims to associate Christ's birthplace with the site

of his death, the rock of Golgotha, the surface of which was hollowed out by still visible trickles of blood.³⁷ Around 1350, an English visitor explained that the miracle of milk exudation had started as soon as the Virgin had pressed her breast against the pillar,³⁸ which had immediately become wet and had started producing milk in its turn:

In that church stands a marble pillar – so explains the Frenchman Ogier d'Anglure in 1395 – on which she [the Virgin Mary] leant when she was milking [her Son]. From the very moment she leant on it, the pillar started oozing. And when you rub it, it immediately starts oozing again. In all places where this milk fell and was sprinkled, the earth is still white like pure milk, and you can take as much as you like for your devotion.³⁹

The cultic success of this site was the outcome of a gradual process, which encouraged the establishment of a wider network of memorial sites within and close to the Basilica. The Milk Grotto was located along the street leading from the Nativity church to the Shepherds' Field, where a number of further attractions came to be recognized. In Beit Sahour a well was said, in the late thirteenth century, to have quenched the thirst of the Virgin Mary, whereas almost on the top of the climb to Bethlehem pilgrims could see some more ruins thought to mark the site where an angelic apparition advised Joseph to flee into Egypt.⁴⁰

35 Perdikas of Ephesus [early fourteenth century], ed. Baseu-Barabas 1997, p. 174;

Humbert of Dijon [1332], ed. Kaeppli/Benoit 1955, p. 527.

36 Catalan anonymous [1323], ed. Pijoan 1907, pp. 376–378.

37 Ludolph of Südheim [1336–1341], ed. Deycks 1851, pp. 72–73.

38 English anonymous [ca. 1350], ed. Bernhard 1890, pp. 29–30.

39 Ogier d'Anglure [1394], ed. Bonnardot/Longnon 1878, p. 33.

40 Bagatti 1952, pp. 243–245, 263; Kopp 1959, pp. 66–70.

The internal topography of the basilica was also enriched with new details. The system of grottoes located to the north of the Nativity cave was especially attractive for Western pilgrims, as it was associated with the memory of the most eminent Latin father, Saint Jerome. In twelfth-century accounts emphasis was laid solely on the latter's burial place, but already in ca. 1169 Theoderic had remarked that the saint's body was no longer in his sarcophagus, and inferred from this that it must have been translated to Constantinople.⁴¹ From the late thirteenth century pilgrims remarked that worship could be addressed, even more than to the empty tomb, to a number of memorial sites evoking Jerome's stay in Bethlehem, and especially his cell, where he had translated the Bible into Latin and where his seat and bed, carved in the rock, could still be seen |PLAN I. 12|. ⁴² It is not by chance that this happened in almost the same years – around 1288–1291 – as the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV was promoting Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome as an authentic and alternative “New Bethlehem”: the relics of the holy fathers were set on display in the pontifical basilica and the remnants of the holy manger were located in a thoroughly new chapel, embellished with a three-dimensional representation of the *Nativity* by the hand of Arnolfo di Cambio.⁴³ The message could not be more explicit: the most holy mementoes associated with Christ's birthplace were no longer in Palestine, but in Rome, and a sumptuous *mise-en-scène* emphasized the superior worship-worthiness of the site.

EXPANDING THE TOPOGRAPHIC NETWORK (LATE THIRTEENTH TO EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURIES)

It is worth stressing, anyway, that Rome's attempt to rival Bethlehem was not really very successful. Santa Maria Maggiore was never perceived as an efficacious alternative to the Palestinian holy site. Even the lack of relics was hardly regarded as diminishing

the cultic status of Christ's birthplace: on the contrary, its emptiness came often to be regarded as a spiritual advantage, inasmuch as the underground caves came to be increasingly experienced as visual sceneries of the holy events, whose lacking elements (especially holy people and other agents) could be integrated and reconstructed in the memorial, or meditational exercise, of pious beholders. The Dominican Ricoldo da Montecroce, in the 1280s, is one of the first pilgrims to give an account of the often awkward ways in which contemplation could be enhanced by investing some secondary details with devotional meanings:

After the Mass – writes Ricoldo – we encountered in the Manger chapel a very nice child, the son of a poor Christian woman who lived close to the church. Joyfully we worshipped the newborn Christ in him and, like the Magi, we made gifts to him and gave him back to his mother.⁴⁴

Late medieval pilgrims were more and more eager to follow directly in the steps of holy figures and perceived meditation as an experience enabling them to become eyewitnesses to the holy events, as if their physical presence in the memorial sites of the Gospel could allow them to overcome the temporal divide separating their time from sacred history. In a sense, emptiness and lack of material evidence could be instrumental in enhancing the devotional worthiness of a site, inasmuch as it encouraged a more elaborate mental reconstruction. This partly explains why ruins and bare

⁴¹ Theoderic, ed. Huygens 1994, p. 180.

⁴² Ricoldo da Monte Croce, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, IV, p. 270; Marin Sanudo, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis* [1321], ed. Bongars 161 I, p. 259. On the distinction between bed and seat cf. Charles de la Rivière [1507], ed. Pouge 1975, p. 104.

⁴³ Aceto 2015.

⁴⁴ Ricoldo da Montecroce, *Liber peregrinationis*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, IV, p. 268.

portions of ground came to be invested with special meanings: it was the pilgrims' special wish to feel involved in the sacred narratives, regardless of their canonicity, that drove them to imagine, for example, that a field filled with small stones, not far from Mar Elias monastery and close to the present-day Tantur Institute, might owe its unpleasant appearance to an unknown episode in Christ's life, which ran in this way:

Close to Bethlehem, one mile far from the village, there is a field of stone chickpeas. Once our Lord passed by on the street and saw a man who was sowing chickpeas. When our Lord asked him what he was sowing, he answered: "I am sowing stones". And the Lord replied: "And let them become stones". From that moment onward, all those chickpeas were turned into stones, and stone chickpeas are found there until our days.⁴⁵

It is significant that this attitude, being distinctive of devotional practices associated with Jesus and Mary, came to be associated also with less prominent figures like Jerome. The latter's memorial sites had considerably multiplied by 1346, when they were visited by the Italian pilgrim Niccolò da Poggibonsi, the author of a very famous travelogue, frequently used as a guide-book and a support for meditation by many later pilgrims and devotees. The underground caves could be accessed from a stairway located in the ancient cloister: they were very dark and they could be inspected only by candle-light. The first room |PLAN I. 12| was provided with an altar and was described as a chapel used by Jerome to perform the mass. Other pilgrims identified it more specifically as the holy father's cell and the place where he did penance and translated the Bible into Latin, yet Niccolò preferred to think that Jerome's most important activities took place on the ground floor. This cave gave access to a smaller one, corresponding to the burial sites of Paula and Eustochium |PLAN I. 10|, which came to be located there even if their association

with the Milk grotto was repeated also in later texts. Close-by was an image of the Virgin Mary, probably a wall painting, which was already barely visible. Finally, this place was connected to another, wider cave, preserving ancient tombs which were identified as those of the Holy Innocents |PLAN I. 8|. ⁴⁶ This thoroughly new tradition was in contrast with the tombs' traditional location in the south cave, which had possibly become hardly accessible, at least to Western pilgrims. As first witnessed in the early seventeenth century, a hole in the ground enabled pilgrims to peep down and contemplate the bones of the martyr children.⁴⁷

The setting of the northern grottoes contrasted strongly with the sumptuous display of ornaments in the basilica and the Nativity cave, which were nevertheless undergoing a gradual process of decay. Emptiness and bare visibility prevailed here and were supposed to arouse efficaciously the visitor's feeling of personal involvement in sacred history: to be privileged was a strategy of evocation *per absentiam*, leading pilgrims to the perception of divine presence as inscribed in space, though belonging to a distinct temporal dimension which could anyway be reconstructed in one's meditative practice. The spread of this attitude among Western pilgrims was undoubtedly encouraged and strengthened by the Minor friars, whose legal status and role as official representatives of the Latin Church in the Holy Land was defined in the 1333 agreement between King Robert of Naples and the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun.⁴⁸ The Custody of the Holy

45 Philip of Savona, *Liber peregrinationum*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, IV, p. 236. The field of chickpeas is probably the same that, according to Theoderic, was said to be associated with the Last Judgment: ed. Huygens 1994, p. 179.

46 Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'Oltremare* [1346], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, pp. 83–84. Cf. the roughly contemporary description by a Greek anonymous, ed. Koikilides/Fokylides 1912, p. 515.

47 Kootwijk 1619, p. 237.

48 De Sandoli 1990.

Land, officially instituted in 1342, was bestowed with the ownership of the former monastery of the regular canons, to the north of the basilica, in 1347, but it is possible that a small Franciscan community was already present in Bethlehem prior to that date.⁴⁹

The Minor friars had special connections with the Palestinian *loca sancta*, on account of their strong Christological focus. In Italy, they promoted worship for memorial sites of Francis of Assisi, the *alter Christus*, the topographic network of which replicated, in many respects, that of Christ in the Holy Land.⁵⁰ In their convents on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem they devoted themselves to the performance of divine offices in the Lord's most eminent holy places and gave both material and spiritual assistance to pilgrims: this meant, in particular, that the pilgrims' devotional experience was strongly informed by the friars, who guided them in their tour and signaled to them what was worth seeing and worshipping. Finally, the Franciscans contributed to the multiplication of the memorial sites and the definition of their cultic status in hierarchic terms: in a number of booklets which could be bought in their convents and were often transcribed in pilgrims' travelogues, all places were listed in a topographic order and readers were informed about the corresponding spiritual advantages, depending on the association of each memorial site with either a plenary indulgence (said to have been granted by Pope Sylvester I in Constantine's times) or a smaller one, consisting of seven years and seven carines (i.e. periods of forty days).⁵¹

Indeed, the devotional landscape of Bethlehem and its neighborhoods enabled visitors to get a great number of indulgences of both types, the most important being marked in pilgrims' guidebooks with a cross. In a booklet written in the last decades of the fourteenth century, the topographic network was described in the following terms, with crosses signaling the places where visitors could get a plenary indulgence:

First, the place where the Magi were given hospitality. Then, where the star appeared to the Magi. Then, the church where saint Elijah the Prophet was born. Then Rachel's tomb. In Bethlehem is the church of the Virgin Mary, in whose interior is the place where Christ was born †. Then the Lord's Manger †. Then, the site where the Child Jesus was circumcised †. Then the site wherein the star disappeared. Then the chapel of Saint Jerome and his sepulchre. Then the chapel of the Holy Innocents and their sepulchre. Then the church of Saint Nicholas where is the sepulchre of Saints Paula and Eustochium. Then the church of the Virgin Mary, where the angel showed her and Joseph the way to Egypt. Then the church of the Angels, where the Angel announced to the shepherds the birth of Jesus. Then the church or tomb of the twelve prophets. Then the monastery of Saint Sabas.⁵²

The sites mentioned in this list stood out for their diversity: they were described as worship-worthy regardless of their being functioning or ruined, built up or standing open-air, and associated with either Latin or Greek Orthodox monks. In different ways, they offered an opportunity for pious meditation and the Friars suggested specific prayers suiting the religious meaning of each site. On the other hand, all hints at popular practices performed in the *loca sancta* and viewed by the Franciscans with some suspicion were accurately avoided. The Milk grotto, for example, was simply described as the departure point of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt.

Perhaps the most important addition to the holy topography of the basilica was the indication of a third place, after the site of Christ's birth and the manger, where pilgrims could get a plenary

49 Golubovich 1906–1927, iv, pp. 34–39; Lemmens 1919, pp. 57–60; Roncaglia 1950; Saletti 2016, pp. 87–88.

50 Bacci 2009.

51 Paulus 1913; Trovato 2006; Campopiano 2014; Saletti 2016, pp. 153–162.

52 *Peregrinationes totius Terrae Sanctae* [ca. 1370–1400], ed. Golubovich 1906–1927, iv, p. 353.

indulgence. Already in the 1280s Philip of Savona made claims about the location somewhere to the left of the choir, i.e., in the northern transept, of the place where the “navel of Christ’s circumcision” had been put.⁵³ Another text from approximately the same period includes the circumcision as one of the sacred events that were worshipped in Bethlehem.⁵⁴ In earlier times, this episode was thought to have taken place in the *Templum Domini*, but given that after the end of the Mamluk-Latin truce in 1244 the Jerusalem Haram was no longer accessible to Western pilgrims the alternative location in the Nativity church was promoted: this helped reinforce the parallelism of Christ’s birthplace with the ancient Temple which had often been evoked since the Crusader period. By 1323 the Nativity church was already said to preserve the very site where the Child had been circumcised. This exceptional pedigree was attributed to the portion of soil marked by the altar of the south transept [PLAN I: D], which had been previously said to mark the burial of the Holy Innocents: the red color of a slab located below the altar table, which was originally interpreted as hinting at the blood of the children slain by Herod’s soldiers,⁵⁵ came to be regarded as a symbol of the first blood which the Son of God had shed on earth.⁵⁶ This shift was probably made easier by the Franciscans’ promotion of a new location for the grotto of the Innocents to the north of the Nativity cave. In the sixteenth century, the Friars showed there a basin that was said to have been stained with blood when the cut prepuce was laid on it.⁵⁷ Some pilgrims went so far as to remark that the veins of the marble altar table gave shape to an image of the *Circumcision*.⁵⁸

Such new developments came to blur the traditional distinction between sacred space, associated with the solemn liturgical *mise-en-scène* in the upper church, and the holy sites, which had been until then confined to the underground dimension of caves. This was partly due to the ritualization of pilgrimage promoted by the Friars.

Visitors to the church tended now to gather first in the Franciscan convent, where they left a number of graffiti displaying their names and coats-of-arms [FIG. 68]. In many cases, the first place where they could say their prayers was the former chapel of the canons’ monastery, now known as Saint Catherine’s [FIG. 67; PLAN I: G]. As shown in Bernardino Amico’s plan [PLAN IV: L, 32, 28], this building included a tiny nave annexed to the northern transept, where a stairway to the Cave of the Innocents was excavated at some time, probably in the second half of the fifteenth century.⁵⁹ The space reserved for the Friars, who sat in a wooden choir, was marked by a stone screen. The building was embellished with mural paintings displaying a cycle of Saint Catherine, and more specifically her *Mystical Marriage*. From the sixteenth century onward, this place came to be regarded as the very site where the mystical marriage had taken place and as a surrogate for the dangerous pilgrimage to Saint Catherine’s monastery on Mount Sinai: pilgrims then received a plenary indulgence and the right to decorate their garments with a wheel-shaped token.⁶⁰

The guided tour organized by the Friars for the Bethlehem visitors took the form of a procession with lit candles, which included stops, or stations, accompanied by the performance of specific prayers. The itinerary, best described in a mid- to late

53 Philip of Savona, *Liber peregrinationum* [ca. 1280–1289], ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, IV, p. 236.

54 *Summa stacionum et dedicacionum*, ed. Saletti 2012, p. 288.

55 Perdikas of Ephesus [ca. 1300], ed. Baseu-Barabas 1997, p. 173.

56 Alessandro Rinuccini, *Sanctissimo Peregrinaggio* [1474], ed. Calamai 1993, p. 143. Among the earliest and more informative sources about the altar of circumcision cf. Catalan anonymous [1323], ed. Pijoan 1907, p. 376; Rhenish anonymous [1350–1360], ed. Conrady 1882, p. 40; Lionardo Frescobaldi [1384], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 199; Ogier d’Anglure [ca. 1395], ed. Bonnardot/Longnon 1878, pp. 32–33. Cf. also the critical remarks by Quaresmi 1639, II, pp. 636–638.

57 Giraudet 1583, p. 71.

58 D’Aveyro 1593, p. 150r.

59 Bagatti 1952, p. 142; Facchini 1986, p. 54.

60 Bacci 2016b, p. 337. Cf. De Stefanis 1573, p. 17.



70 | Wooden structure of the roofing over the choir, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 15th century with later restorations

fourteenth-century travelogue, began in the convent chapel of Saint Catherine and entered the church through a door leading to the north transept, where pilgrims were invited to reproduce the Magi's gradual approach to the holy cave: they were shown not only the site where the star had stopped before falling into the well, but also the very spot where the Magi had dismounted their camels, corresponding to the present-day altar of the Virgin [PLAN I. A], and the place where they had prepared their gifts [PLAN I. B]. After looking at the well of the star [PLAN I. 13], the group went down to the Nativity cave to pray before Christ's birthplace [PLAN I. 2] and the manger [PLAN I. 3]. Then it went out through the southern stairway and came to the altar of Circumcision [PLAN I. D], and advanced through the nave up to the cloister. From there it descended to the northern caves, where pilgrims worshipped Jerome's cell [PLAN I. 12] and cenotaph [PLAN I. 11] and the burials of the Innocents [PLAN I. 8].⁶¹

The expansion of the local network of holy spots was indeed instrumental in emphasizing still further its cultic core, i.e.

the Nativity cave. The cave did not undergo significant alterations in the Mamluk period, yet lack of maintenance and the action of candles' smoke strongly contributed to the gradual decay of the ancient ornaments. The portions of ground working as visual foci of pilgrims' devotion were probably even more directly subjected to consumption. The hole of Christ's childbirth, which enabled pilgrims to see and touch the underlying red stone, was redecorated, already by the first half of the fourteenth century, with a star-shaped stone frame. In contrast with the Crusader cross seen there by Theoderic, which established a parallel with Christ's death, the star reinforced the association with the Magi's narrative and made clear what was known from Christmas tradition, namely that the heavenly sign guiding the wise men to Bethlehem had stopped exactly above the cave and, more specifically, above the very spot where the Messiah was born.⁶² The star-shaped ornament became so distinctive of the hallowed hole marking Christ's birth that it later came to be replicated in the decoration of analogous holy spots in other locations, such as John the Baptist's birthplace at 'Ain Karim.⁶³

Some change happened also in the nearby Manger cave. The marble structure with three openings marking the crib in Theoderic's times was only partly extant, because pilgrims were accustomed to scrape off marble and stone fragments from the holy site.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the place was provided with material indicators of the sacred events associated with it: the sketch of a crown

61 Rhenish anonymous [ca. 1350–1360], ed. Conrady 1882, pp. 40–41. For the prayers performed in each site, cf. *Processionale Hierosolymitanum* [second half of the fourteenth century], ed. Golubovich 1906–1927, IV, pp. 363–364. See also Facchini 1986, pp. 40–46, 56–59, who postpones the date of the Rhenish anonymous to around 1400.

62 Bagatti 1952, p. 125. Among the earliest and most accurate descriptions cf. Giovanni di Fedanzola [ca. 1330–1335], ed. Nicolini [et al.] 2003, p. 110.

63 Pietro Verniero, *Croniche*, ed. Golubovich 1930–1936, II, p. 17.

64 Perdikas of Ephesus [early fourteenth century], ed. Baseu-Barabas 1997, p. 173; James of Verona, ed. Monneret de Villard 1950, p. 62.

housing a cross carved directly on the stone signaled the very spot on which the Child's head had rested, whereas one hole – perhaps one of those seen by Theoderic – was said to be the one where Christ had inserted his arm, so that the stone had become as soft as flour.⁶⁵ The latter looked much like the nearby spot of Jesus' birth: it was encircled by a star-shaped motif and enabled visitors to glance at an underlying red stone.⁶⁶ Furthermore, on the rocky wall pilgrims could see some iron hangers and rings that were supposed to have been used to fasten the ox and the donkey.⁶⁷

From the late fifteenth century onward, visitors were also invited to recognize the silhouette of Saint Jerome in the veins of a marble slab located to the north of the Manger. This was perceived as a miraculous sign, a sort of image “not made by human hands” which bore witness to the Latin holy father's exceptional worship for the humble place where the Child had been laid. Viewers believed they could recognize the image of an old man wearing a long beard and hood.⁶⁸ It was perhaps not by chance that this tradition started developing in the same period, i.e., the 1470s, in which the Friars had just excavated a new communicating corridor between the Nativity cave and the northern grottoes.⁶⁹ The holy sites could now be accessed from the Franciscan convent without entering the church: the cave of the Innocents and those of Saint Jerome were therefore transformed into a sort of antechamber to Christ's birthplace and invested with new meanings. The location of Jerome's sarcophagus, which had been previously described by some pilgrims as being in the Nativity cave itself, was firmly associated with the second inner cave [PLAN I. II]. The sepulchers of Paula and Eustochium as well as that of Saint Eusebius (associated with an altar) came also to be definitively located in its vicinity [PLAN I. 9–10].⁷⁰ This new setting encouraged visitors to look to the holy father as a model of contemplative life and, more specifically, of meditation on the mystery of Incarnation: when looking

at his *acheiropoieton* in the holy manger, they could but hope to correctly imitate his transports of mystical joy at the sight of the *locus sanctus*.

Indeed, the wise men from the East provided an even more obvious model of worship for the Child Jesus. By the first half of the fifteenth century pilgrims identified the south-eastern corner of the Manger cave [PLAN I. 4] as the place where the Magi first saw Mary and offered their gifts to the Lord.⁷¹ This tradition was at odds with the previous location of the meeting place of the Virgin with the three Kings upstairs, on the altar erected close to the well of the Star [PLAN I. B], where a panel with the inscription *Salve Regina* visualized the memorial meaning of the site.⁷² The Flemish pilgrim Anselmo Adorno, in 1470, reported both stories without acknowledging this contradiction.⁷³ It can be assumed that, with the establishment of the subterranean procession about these same dates, the ancient stations in the transepts were gradually abandoned and were surrogated by the memorial of the Adoration erected in the Manger cave.⁷⁴ As is first witnessed in the early sixteenth century, the memorial came to be marked with a marble altar [FIG. 7 I], supported by four colonnettes, and later embellished with a painting attributed to Palma il Giovane, the purpose of which was to visualize the holy event commemorated there.⁷⁵

65 Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'Oltremare*, ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 82.

66 Giovanni di Fedanzola, ed. Nicolini [et al.] 2003, p. 112.

67 Giovanni di Fedanzola, ed. Nicolini [et al.] 2003, p. 110; Ludolph of Südheim, ed. Deycks 1851, p. 72.

68 Bagatti 1952, pp. 121–122; Bacci 2006, pp. 53–54; Bacci 2013, pp. 182–184.

69 Facchini 1986, pp. 46–50.

70 Bagatti 1952, pp. 139–141. On the altar of Saint Eusebius cf. Charles de la Rivière [1507], ed. Pouge 1975, p. 104.

71 First mention in Georg Pfintzing [1435], ed. Röhrich/Meisner 1880, p. 87.

72 Nicolas Loupvent [1531], ed. Bonnin 1976, p. 115.

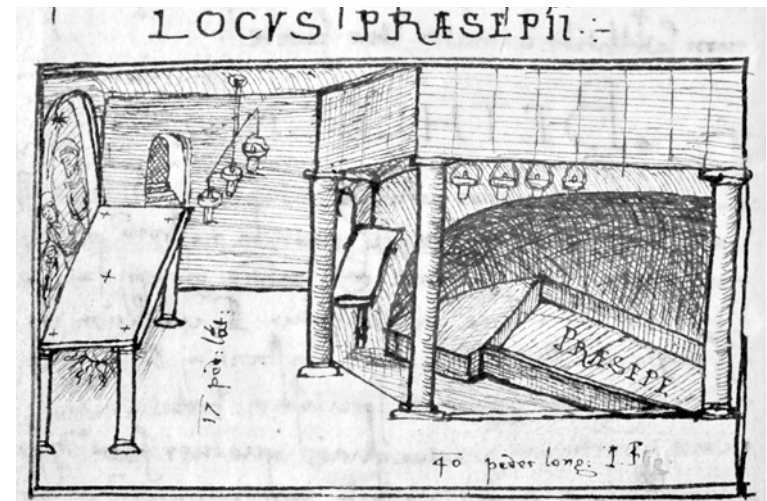
73 Anselmo Adorno [1470–1471], ed. Heers/de Groer 1978, p. 286.

74 Facchini 1986, pp. 51–56, 60–65.

75 Bagatti 1952, pp. 126–127. The first mention occurs in Charles de la Rivière [1507], ed. Pouge 1975, p. 106.

Other parts of the cave were invested with new memorial meanings. The quadrangular structure [FIG. 73] including the circular mouth of a now exhausted cistern which can still be seen on the north-western corner [PLAN I. 5] was identified with the place where the water of Christ's first bath had been thrown away.⁷⁶ It probably corresponded to the *balneatorium Virginis Mariae* mentioned by Saewulf in the early twelfth century. The absence of further references in the Crusader period was probably due to the newcomers' promotion of the alternative site known as *balneum Jesu* on the Ḥaram eš-Šarif.⁷⁷ The Temple Mount and its *loca sancta* were nevertheless inaccessible in the fourteenth century, and many pilgrims bore witness to the renewed location of the holy spot in the Nativity cave.⁷⁸ Greek pilgrims assumed that the sweet fragrance they could smell in the site came out of the hole hallowed by the holy water.⁷⁹ In the fifteenth century, anyway, it came often to be mistaken for the Well of the Star: perhaps this was the outcome of an intentional *damnatio memoriae* by the Latins, who, on the authority of Saint Jerome, dismissed the possibility that the newborn may have needed washing, given that he was supposed by theologians to have been born clean of all impurities.⁸⁰ In their turn, local Muslims located there the very spot of the palm tree which had bent toward Mary to nourish her with its dates: oddly enough, this tradition was often reported even by Western pilgrims and was eventually included into the network of holy sites that were recommended to visitors for worship.⁸¹

The Child's bath was most efficaciously evoked by the detail with the two nurses displayed in the mosaic of the eastern niche: indeed, the location of a memorial site associated with this episode in the cave itself was a response to an iconographic convention which was constantly repeated in Byzantine religious imagery and was therefore familiar to Greek beholders, whereas it was gradually becoming obsolete in Western tradition. In the



71 | The Manger cave, sketch from Sebastian Werro, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum*, 1581 / Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire (Fribourg), ms L181, fol. 64v

late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Nativity scene came to be imagined according to a thoroughly new scheme, exerting a strong impact on both iconography and meditational practice. The origins of this change can be traced back to the visionary experience that Saint Birgitta of Sweden had while staying in the cave during her pilgrimage to Bethlehem in 1373. According to the *Revelations* of this much renowned and influential mystic, she was enabled there, by grace of Mary herself, to contemplate the event of Christ's birth as it actually happened. Indeed, what Birgitta saw thoroughly contrasted with iconographic tradition and was even controversial on theological grounds: Mary had taken off

76 Tobler 1849, pp. 176–177; Hamilton 1947, p. 88; Bagatti 1952, p. 126; Bacci forthcoming.

77 See above, chapter 2.

78 First mention by the Catalan anonymous [1323], ed. Pijoan 1907, p. 376, followed by Niccolò da Poggibonsi [1346], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 82. As to Greek travelogues, cf. Allatii anonymous [fifteenth century], ed. Migne 1856–1866, CXXXIII, col. 989c; Kadas 1986, p. 92.

79 Külzer 1994, p. 147.

80 Quaresmi 1639, II, pp. 638–639.

81 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa [ca. 1332], transl. Gibb 1958–1971, I, p. 77; *List of indulgences* [late fourteenth century], ed. De Castro 1957, p. 466; William Wey [1458], ed. Williams 1857, p. 46.



72 | Replica of the Nativity cave, Cappella della Natività, Sacro Monte di Varallo, late 15th century

her shoes, veil, and mantle and was genuflected with her back turned to the crib and her eyes looking eastwards. In other words, to the Virgin was attributed the posture and attitude which was typical of contemporary pilgrims worshipping the hole of Christ's birthplace [FIG. 5]. As soon as she felt that the baby was moving itself in her womb, she realized that he was born and lay in front of her, surrounded by a supernatural light. She understood from this that he was the Son of God and immediately started worshipping Him. Joseph joined her shortly thereafter: then the newborn was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in the crib. No mention was made of either nurses or baths: the story insisted, on the contrary, on the thoroughly extraordinary, supernatural circumstances of Jesus' birth.⁸²

Birgitta's revelation was so influential that the standard scheme of the *Nativity* scene came to be basically altered: representations of her vision, displaying Mary and Joseph worshipping the Child lying on the ground, started circulating in Latin Europe in the late fourteenth century and came to replace the standard image

corresponding to the traditional Byzantine type. The Franciscans were undoubtedly aware of such developments. A curious text written in 1467, which was basically a list of instructions for the mental reconstruction of Gospel events in the form of a Holy Land travelogue, suggested meditation on the crib in terms reminiscent of Birgitta's vision:

Think here of that pure small virgin as she contemplates in company of that bearded old man the divine wisdom reflected by that baby, while the angels sing *Gloria in excelsis Deo in terra pax hominibus bone voluntatis*.⁸³

This association was made even more explicit in the late fifteenth century, when the Friars decided to hide the ancient niche mosaic behind a painting representing the holy parents kneeling and adoring the newborn Jesus lying on the hay: this image was used as visual focus also during the performance of daily prayers.⁸⁴ In this way, viewers were spurred to an exercise of contemplation made in accordance with contemporary Western devotional patterns. The appearance of the cave in this period is restituted by the monumental replica erected around 1500 by the Franciscan observants in the *Sacro Monte* of Varallo, Lombardy [FIG. 72], where the upper zone of the niche above the altar is decorated with statues shaping a *Nativity* according to the new scheme.⁸⁵ The setting of this remarkable copy, where the natural, stony appearance of the grotto was intentionally set on display in a definitely topomimetic way, is also indicative of the specific devotional approach

82 Birgitta of Sweden, *Revelaciones*, 7:21–22, ed. Undhagen/Bergh 1967–1991, VII, pp. 187–190. Cf. Bacci 2013, pp. 193–195.

83 *Lo itinerario de andare in Hierusalem* [1469], ed. Longo 2007, p. 185.

84 Bagatti 1952, p. 124. Cf. the accurate descriptions by Oldřich Prefát [1546], ed. Hrdina 1947, p. 174; Rocchetta 1630, p. 264; Quaresmi 1639, II, p. 630, and Kootwijck 1619, pp. 229, 232, for its involvement in liturgical prayers.

85 Pomi 2008, pp. 67–80.



73 | The hole of the water of Christ's first bath, Nativity cave, Bethlehem

informing the perception of the holy cave. No attempts were made at imitating the Crusader décors, given that the ancient mosaic ornaments, mostly darkened by candles' smoke and partly ruined, were no longer perceived as special indicators of the sanctity attributed to the Bethlehem grotto. On the contrary, visitors were now more eager to look for material clues as to the original and truthful scenery of the Gospel events: "This is the most devout place I ever saw", wrote the Italian priest Mariano of Siena in 1431, hinting at the Manger cave, "as everything is here of stone".⁸⁶ By inspecting the rocky walls, pilgrims found a confirmation of what they knew from Christian tradition, namely that Jesus was born in an extremely humble and unappealing place. A multisensory approach to the holy spot, involving sight, touch, and smell, enabled visitors to sense the special grace granted to it by God: a supernatural fragrance could be smelt as soon as pilgrims prostrated toward and kissed the crib.⁸⁷

The high respect shown by Muslim visitors to the cave was perceived by Christians as a further proof of the special favor bestowed by God on that gracious place. Islamic pilgrimage kept developing and the Bethlehem Muslims are known to have constantly paid homage to the holy cave. Local women were accustomed

to prepare very special breads which were eaten as blessings and charms against labor pains: these were allegedly rolled out on the marble table covering Christ's birthplace and their flour was mixed with water from the Well of the Star.⁸⁸ Furthermore, mothers were accustomed to lay their children in the manger in order to obtain their speedy recovery.⁸⁹

FROM THE MAMLUKES TO THE OTTOMANS

The contrast between the sumptuous decorum of the upper church and rocky appearance of the cave was often emphasized in the Mamluk period. The beauty of the basilica stood out especially when compared with the ruined landscape that preceded it. The village was almost deserted, with the only possible exception of an area to the south of the basilica along the road to Beit Sahour, which, in the Ottoman period, was to become the Greek Orthodox quarter (or *hara*) of Anatreh and the nucleus of the present-day town.⁹⁰ The ancient town walls were apparently destroyed at some time in the sixteenth century, and a new built up area started developing to the west of the present-day Manger Square: the latter was said to lay at an arrow's shot from the church.⁹¹ In their turn, many of the old structures adjoining the church had undergone damage or were in a state of decay: in the late sixteenth century, the Crusader walled entrance was still standing, whereas the buildings delimiting the ancient atrium were mostly abandoned, or used as stables, as in the case of the so-called "School of Saint Jerome". Parts of such

86 Mariano da Siena [1431], ed. Pirillo 1991, p. 115.

87 Felix Fabri [1480], ed. Hassler 1843–1849, I, p. 442.

88 Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *Libro d'Oltremare* [1346], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, p. 83; Francesco Suriano [ca. 1500], ed. Golubovich 1900, p. 124; Aveyro 1593, p. 155v.

89 Charles de la Rivière [1507], ed. Pouge 1975, p. 109.

90 Weill-Rochant 1997, p. 14.

91 Kootwijck 1619, p. 227. Cf. Weill-Rochant 1997, pp. 14–16.

structures were occupied by the Armenians: the legend, recorded by pilgrims since the early fifteenth century, according to which the basilica was founded by Trdat III, the first Christian king of Armenia, was instrumental to their claims of possessing special rights on the Nativity site.⁹²

Even if the Friars had to face increasing difficulties after the Ottoman conquest of Palestine in 1516, they stoutly defended their *praedominium*, which was made especially evident in Christmastime: even if the Greek clergy and other non-Latin denominations (including Armenians, Ethiopians, Copts, Maronites, Syrian Orthodox, and others) actively participated in the performance of some liturgical prayers, the most important rites of Christmas Eve were entrusted to the Franciscans, who exercised their right of precedence.⁹³ On ordinary days, each group performed the Mass at their reserved altars: the Armenians, Copts, and Syrian Orthodox in the north transept and the Greeks on the main altar. The Altar of Circumcision in the south transept belonged to the Latins, who tended nevertheless to officiate in the chapel of Saint Catherine.⁹⁴ Pilgrims kept visiting the church and a prosperous commerce developed in the artisanal shops of the village: many of the Catholic converts, educated in the Friars' school founded in the late sixteenth century, dealt with the production of mother-of-pearl objects of religious theme, models of the Palestinian shrines, and wood carvings representing Christmas subjects and eventually including small relics of the holy spots. Most remarkably, this activity survives still in our times.⁹⁵ Visitors were also offered the possibility to take back home an indelible mark of their accomplished pilgrimage by having their arms tattooed with religious symbols, such as the Bethlehem coat-of-arms, consisting of a cross of Jerusalem combined with three crowns and one star.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the Ottoman conquest of Palestine had important, and mostly negative, repercussions on the basilica. First of all,

the plundering of the marble revetments, including the floors, was pursued by Suleyman the Magnificent, who, according to some sources, made use of them to refurbish the ornaments of the Dome of the Rock: by the end of the sixteenth century, only the choir was still embellished with marble slabs, whereas the rest of the paving was made of a red-colored *cocciopesto* (lime mortar with crushed bricks).⁹⁷ All this took place despite the bans against the dilapidations promulgated by the Sublime Porte in 1532 and 1596.⁹⁸ It is worth stressing that the building, and especially the roof, had already suffered some damage caused first of all by seepages of water which made necessary the periodical substitution of rotten wooden beams: repairs had already taken place in the 1280s and the late 1390s.⁹⁹ Maintenance works had to be authorized by the Mamluk Sultan and were not always possible, because the procedure was complicated and presumably also expensive. In the second half of the fifteenth century, in the aftermath of an earthquake that occurred in the late 1450s, the roof structure had weakened to such an extent that there was a danger of it collapsing. The restorations promoted by the Father Guardian of Bethlehem Giovanni Tomacelli, on the authorization of the Mamluk Sultan and with the financial support of the Duke of Burgundy and the King of England, took place in the 1470s and were completed by 1479.¹⁰⁰

92 Johann Schildtberger [1394–1427], ed. Langmantel 1885, p. 87; Simeon of Poland [1615–1620], transl. Bournoutian 2007, p. 230.

93 See the descriptions by De Stefanis 1573, pp. 1–7, and D'Aveyro 1593, p. 156r–158r.

94 Kootwijk 1619, p. 228.

95 Zvallart 1595, p. 206; Pococke 1745, vol. II/2, p. 40. Cf. Bagatti 1952, pp. 235–236; Giacaman 1997, pp. 33–34; Piccirillo 2007, pp. 116–135; Norris 2013; El Ama 2014.

96 Thévenot 1664, pp. 404–405; Laffi 1683, pp. 348–349; Clarke 1814, II, p. 381.

97 Bacci 2015, p. 46.

98 Castellani 1922, p. 15, doc. 88 and p. 31, doc. 213. According to Jean Chesneau, *Le voyage*, ed. Schefer 1887, pp. 125–126, the nave was victim to an incessant dilapidation.

99 Castellani 1922, pp. 4–5, docs 7–8, 11; Saletti 2016, pp. 126–127.

100 Bacci/Bianchi/Campana/Fichera 2012, p. 8; Bacci 2015, p. 44.

The works were coordinated by Venetian architects and involved most of the roofing, which was reconstructed with the use of larch beams and other materials transported from the Veneto: especially at the crossing, they gave birth to a very complex system of triangular frames connected by trusses and rafters, converging in a central king post with a flower-shaped end |FIG. 70|. ¹⁰¹ At any rate, such works proved soon to be insufficient, and mentions of periodical refurbishments are often included in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century chronicles. ¹⁰²

A second consequence of Ottoman rule was that the nave came to be perceived as a sort of separate space, reserved for Muslim prayer and thoroughly profane activities, such as the administration of justice. In 1586, the knight Jean Zvallart was greatly astonished at the sight of the local *qadi*, whom he was invited to greet on his way from the church courtyard to the Franciscan convent:

Then you enter a vaulted vestibule, where is a big and high door, embellished after the old fashion [i.e. the Armenian door], and through it people go inside the Church. There we met the qadi, as the Lord of Bethlehem is called: he sat on the ground, over the stairway in front of the choir, on a small carpet after the Turkish manner, given that they make no use of chairs, seats or stools. The Father Guardian wanted us to greet him. Then, as he dismissed us with a nod, we entered the convent... ¹⁰³

The use of the space for profane purposes brought with it a number of practical difficulties. Ottoman soldiers were stationed in the church and practiced their harquebuses by shooting the mosaic angels with bullets made out of the lead revetment of the church roof. Many people entered the nave to speak with the soldiers or the *qadi*, and some of them came with their horses, camels or other animals. Apparently, not only occasional visitors, but also

Turkish officers with their families were accustomed to dwell there, presumably because of lack of lodgings in the village. ¹⁰⁴ The Friars reacted by walling up most of the Crusader door and transforming it into a diminutive entrance, which forced people to bend down before going through: on account of this, it came to be known as the “Door of Humility” |FIG. 2|. ¹⁰⁵ Possibly, the Franciscans took this opportunity to set on display, immediately above the new entrance, a marble relief with the *Nativity* which was still seen in the mid-eighteenth century by a German pilgrim. ¹⁰⁶ At the same time, it was decided to bolt the side door leading from the nave to the Franciscan convent to avoid it being accessed by people gathering in the church. ¹⁰⁷ In its turn, the Armenian door giving access to the nave was transformed into a smaller one for the same reason. ¹⁰⁸

The nave was also used for Islamic prayer, but it is not clear whether some specific furnishings, like a Mihrāb, were erected there. Well recorded is Muslim pilgrimage to the cave, where Western visitors were often surprised to see that the site, and more specifically the holy Manger, was worshipped so intensely also by the “Saracens”: when the German Wilhelm Tzewers performed the Mass there in 1478, he realized that most of his audience was Muslim. ¹⁰⁹ Ottoman sources indicate that pilgrimage to the grotto was widespread especially among the high dignitaries of Jerusalem, who visited Christ’s birthplace once a year, led by their *ulema*. Such a habit was not infrequently condemned by the most rigorist

¹⁰¹ Macchioni [et al.] 2012, p. 45.

¹⁰² Pietro Verniero, *Croniche*, ed. Golubovich 1930–1936, I, pp. 271, 318

¹⁰³ Zvallart 1595, p. 207.

¹⁰⁴ Thévenot 1664, p. 403.

¹⁰⁵ Bacci 2015, p. 46.

¹⁰⁶ Lusignan 1789, p. 158.

¹⁰⁷ Amico 1609, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Rocchetta 1630, p. 256.

¹⁰⁹ Wilhelm Tzewers, *Itinerarius Terrae Sanctae* [1477–1478], ed. Hartmann 2004, p. 268.

interpreters of Islam, but, as a counterargument, worshippers could rely on the authority of *fada'il* literature, laying emphasis on the story of Muhammad's stop in Bethlehem during his nocturnal journey.¹¹⁰ In a 1675 document, the Jerusalem dignitaries themselves described the church nave as the place where they could have some rest and prepare coffee once they had performed their prayers in the grotto.¹¹¹ In order to prevent the people gathering in the church from peeping down during the performance of religious prayers, the Friars hung curtains before the two bronze doors of the holy cave: a late sixteenth-century text makes clear, anyway, that these curtains were opened when the site was approached by members of the Turkish establishment.¹¹²

The new political frame inaugurated by the Ottoman conquest led also to the gradual reduction of the hegemonic role that the Franciscans had obtained under Mamluk rule. The Greek Church was often privileged also on account of the institutional function attributed to the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople as chief representative of Christians in the Ottoman empire. Moreover, in the periods of war with Western European powers, the Custody of the Holy Land was often victim to retaliations, which slowly eroded its influence in the Holy Sites. By the first half of the sixteenth century the eastern end of the church already belonged entirely to the Greek clergy, composed of monks and a Bishop who had their residence in the old defensive tower in the vicinity of the south transept. Close-by was the ancient sacristy of the Crusader church [PLAN I. E], known by then as chapel of Saint George: sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *proskynetaria* praised the prevailing azure color of its mural paintings.¹¹³

It was probably in this same period that the Greek clergy felt the need to erect a more efficacious barrier to separate the bema and the nave.¹¹⁴ Contemporary plans and Amico's eastern view of the basilica show that, in the late sixteenth century, the west side

of the choir screen consisted of a solid, though not very tall, wall, against which two altars leant.¹¹⁵ That to the south was consecrated to Saint Simeon and some pilgrims believed they could see in its marble plaques the miraculous imprint of the Temple priest who had held Christ in his arms.¹¹⁶ The wall extended also to the side aisles and incorporated the last columns of the inner and central rows, between which small doors were opened.

This was the starting point of a process leading to the gradual partition of the church complex into smaller plots, resulting from a rather harsh struggle for hegemony between the Greek Orthodox, the Franciscan Custody, and the Armenians. The alternating fortunes of each community were largely the outcome of the Sublime Porte's wavering attitude, which was conditioned by wider political considerations (such as the influence exerted by the European powers presenting themselves as protectors of Holy Land Christians) and, as is explicitly stated in contemporary sources, by the Ottoman officials' openness to bribery. Each group longed to secure exclusive rights on the most holy spots and even apparently banal actions, such as hanging a lamp or setting a small cupboard for liturgical vessels in their vicinity, could be interpreted as subtle strategies to stake a claim on them.

In 1637 the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophanes III was granted hegemony in the basilica.¹¹⁷ The Franciscans were therefore expelled from the holy cave and the direct communication

110 See, among others, Ibn al-Firkah, *The Book of Arousing Souls* [ca. 1300], transl. Matthews 1949, p. 8.

111 Peri 2001, pp. 70–72.

112 Rocchetta 1630, pp. 258–259.

113 Kadas 1986, pp. 106, 121, 148.

114 Facchini 1986, p. 62; Bacci 2015, p. 48.

115 Amico 1609, pls 4–5; Beaveau 1619, p. 145; Quaresmi 1639, plate between pp. 676 and 677.

116 Alessandro di Filippo Rinuccini, *Sanctissimo Pellegrinaggio* [1474], ed. Calamai 1993, p. 143; Beaveau 1619, p. 145.

117 Peri 2001, pp. 108–109.

from the cave to the Grotto of Innocents was walled up, even if the Friars were quick enough to appropriate the north-western corner of the vestibule with the hole of the water of Christ's bath, which was by then identified as the Well of the Star. Some years earlier, in 1621, the Friars had opened a new cave to the south-east of the Grotto of Innocents, which was consecrated to Saint Joseph and provided with an altar, where an image of the *Virgin's Marriage* was put on display |PLAN I. 7|. ¹¹⁸ On account of its location on the way from Saint Catherine's to Christ's birth-place even this secondary space was invested with new memorial qualities and integrated into the pilgrims' ritualized itinerary. Yet, the procession was now forced to stop in the connecting corridor, where the Franciscans set up a substitute holy site: the daily prayers, formerly performed in front of the Manger, as well as the plenary indulgence associated with the latter and the niche of Jesus' birth, were transferred to a small altar, decorated with an image of the holy event, which leant against the walled door to the Nativity cave. ¹¹⁹ In this way, the site-bound sanctity of Jesus' crib came to be surrogated by a figurative *ersatz* located just a few meters far from the holy spot. Furthermore, the convent church of Saint Catherine came to be regarded as the major ritual space for Latin Christians: accordingly, it was provided with a new and more updated setting, by shifting the choir to the space behind the altar. ¹²⁰

The Greeks' action was aimed at re-establishing their control over the whole of the basilica and the Patriarchs strongly engaged in putting pressure on the Ottoman government in order to be allowed to make restorations in the building. Their first action concerned the cave, where the painting displaying the *Nativity* according to Saint Birgitta's revelation was removed. In 1639, the Cretan painter Jeremias Palladas, whose work was much appreciated because of its loyalty to Byzantine tradition, was commissioned

to paint new icons to embellish the church. ¹²¹ The second, and much more extensive initiative, took place in 1671, after Patriarch Dositheos II was authorized to make repairs in the upper church. Indeed, his predecessor Nektarios had already obtained substantial funding, thanks to a rich merchant from Constantinople named Manolakis Kastorianos (ostensibly a native of Kastoria in Northern Greece), for the making of works which, far from being limited to simple maintenance of the roof as in previous cases, were basically aimed at providing the building with suitable furnishings, in keeping with the *décors* of contemporary Orthodox churches. Apart from the substitution of the hard stones closing the windows with glass and the decoration of the side-entrances to the cave with new marble stones, Dositheos entrusted woodcarvers and icon-painters from Chios to erect a sumptuous iconostasis before the eastern apse. This was a major achievement, given that liturgical praxis of the time provided that the most solemn parts of the Mass were to be performed in secret, behind a wooden barrier, aptly decorated with icons of saints, representations of the twelve feasts, and a visual evocation of the Crucifixion. Possibly, the elegant Cretan-style cross with side-icons of Mary and John the Evangelist, painted by a not better known Vasileios in 1681 and presently preserved in the Chapel of Saint George, was originally meant to be displayed on the top of this iconostasis. ¹²²

The wall between nave and eastern end was raised and transformed it into a much more massive structure with only three small doors – one in the nave and two in the aisles – which could be locked at night |FIG. 74|. This was apparently done with the aim

¹¹⁸ Pietro Verniero, *Croniche*, ed. Golubovich 1930–1936, II, pp. 27, 45. Cf. Bagatti 1952, p. 143.

¹¹⁹ Facchini 1986, pp. 65–68.

¹²⁰ Nau 1757, p. 416.

¹²¹ Kazanaki 1974, pp. 272–277; Chatzidakis/Drakopoulou 1987–2010, II, p. 268.

¹²² Chatzidakis/Drakopoulou 1987–2010, I, p. 187.

of enhancing the spatial separation of the liturgical space from the western end, which was by then still used as a sort of public, or institutional space. Nevertheless, far from considering the nave as lost, the Greeks strongly engaged in actions towards the attainment of full control of the church. In accordance with a practice widespread in late medieval convent churches, Franciscans had previously consented to the interment of the dead (presumably pilgrims, devotees, and also friars) in the courtyard located to the south of the church nave and north of the narthex. Dositheos remarked that the whole area was dotted with tombs laying one above the other: it was decided that all corpses were to be exhumed and buried in the village.¹²³

The cemetery |PLAN IV. 9| was transformed into the private garden of the Greek monks, whose residence was by then in the south tower |PLAN IV. 19| and a new door was opened in the wall of the south aisle, close to the baptismal font, to allow them to have a direct entrance into the nave. The opening of a new door was very challenging, manifesting Greek Orthodox ownership of the whole church and their right to use the nave as a space reserved for Christian believers attending the Mass. This action was followed by the renovation of the pavement, during which the monks were rumored to have found remnants of Islamic, yet much more probably Latin burials.¹²⁴

All this was also part of a specific and skillful strategy by which local Muslims came to be expelled from the church nave. In 1675, after they were presented with the *fait accompli* of the church renovation, several dignitaries applied to the *qadi* of Jerusalem and later to the Ottoman government claiming that the nave belonged to them and that it had never been used as a Christian hall of prayer. The Orthodox clergy probably made use of all its diplomatic skills at court and benefited from the puritanical climate that prevailed by then in Istanbul. The issue was forwarded to the highest official interpreter of religious law, the Grand Mufti, who



74 | The choir wall in the Nativity church, Bethlehem, early 20th century

pronounced a very negative *fatwa*, questioning the authenticity and worship-worthiness of the Nativity site and condemning Islamic pilgrimage to Bethlehem as “reprehensible”. Accordingly, the *firman* promulgated by the Sultan explicitly prohibited Muslims from entering the church and stated that the building could be used exclusively as a Christian shrine.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, Orthodox hegemony was challenged by another Christian group, the Armenians, who consolidated their presence from 1621, when Patriarch Grigor Parontēr bought the partly ruined buildings to the south of the courtyard and established there a monastery and a hospice for pilgrims. Such developments probably put an end to the previous sharing of the cells with Syriac Orthodox and Coptic monks.¹²⁶ The complex included also a church, at the first floor, consecrated to the Mother of God

¹²³ Dositheos 1715, pp. 1213–1215. Cf. also Papadopoulos 1900, pp. 164–169; Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], pp. 463–464.

¹²⁴ Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], p. 467.

¹²⁵ Peri 2001, pp. 71–73.

¹²⁶ Kootwijk 1619, p. 238.

and aptly decorated with many *khač'kars*, and a now vanished chapel dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, which was apparently located close to the narthex of the basilica.¹²⁷ Armenian pilgrims who were lodged there reported that the monastery was provided with all comforts and praised its luxuriant garden, as well as its holy sites: first of all, the “school of Saint Jerome” |FIG. 15|, which was used as a stable and nonetheless stood out because of its beautiful columns. Furthermore, from the garden they approached the external south wall of the basilica: an altar was erected somewhere in this area and a small window enabled visitors to peep down and contemplate the bones of the Holy Innocents, lit by several lamps.¹²⁸ Claims on the holy spots within the Nativity cave were regularly laid by the Armenian monks, who in the late sixteenth century had been granted the right to maintain two of the seventeen lamps hanging in the Nativity cave (nine above Christ's birthplace, six above the Manger, and another two from the central vault).¹²⁹

The history of the Bethlehem church in later Ottoman times was characterized by unceasing efforts on the part of each of the three leading communities to assert their exclusive hegemony or, at least, to gain a foothold in the holy places. Meanwhile, all other denominations, such as the Syrian Orthodox, the Copts and Ethiopians, but also the minor Orthodox communities such as Georgians and Serbians, had become too weak and numerically insignificant to participate in this struggle and, finally, they were obliged to accept patronage of one of the major churches and, in many cases, to hand over their rights to their protectors. In their turn, the most eminent European powers, in particular France, Russia, Austria, and Spain, were more and more frequently asked to back the claims of their Christian protégés via their ambassadors at the Sublime Porte, and the Question of the Holy Sites was transformed into an issue of international politics.¹³⁰

In 1690, in the aftermath of the failed siege to Vienna in 1683 and with the aim of gaining French political support, the Ottoman government issued a firman restoring the Franciscans to their role of preeminence in both Jerusalem and Bethlehem. They were granted ownership not only of the Nativity cave, but also of the bema of the upper church, and their first action was to remove the iconostasis erected by Patriarch Dositheos.¹³¹ The underground passage to the grotto was reopened and new images were located close to the holy spots. Indeed, the major renovation consisted in the redecoration in 1711 of the hole of Christ's birth with a silver star bearing the Latin inscription *Hic de Virgine Maria Iesus Christus natus est*, which had already existed at some time in the early decades of the seventeenth century, when it was transcribed by Quaresmi and others.¹³² Embellishments were also made in the convent: the Armenian pilgrim Zvar Jiyerji, who visited Bethlehem in 1721, was highly delighted to see the imposing organ located in the church of Saint Catherine and the beautiful vestments preserved in the latter's sacristy |PLAN IV. 27|. He also admired the luxuriant garden |PLAN IV. 36| and the newly built, bright and comfortable cells, provided with a religious image, three big maps and a large glass window. Three dogs kept on chains and released at night constantly watched over the Friars' safety.¹³³

Yet, the Franciscan victory was short-lived. A new firman issued by Sultan Osman III in 1757 granted the Greek Orthodox full

127 Alawnowni 1931, p. 240; Khatchadourian/Basmadjian 2014, pp. 154–159. Cf. also the mention of the pilgrims' hostel in Eremia Č'elēpi K'ēōmiwrčēan's late seventeenth-century map of Armenian holy places, ed. Uluhogian 2000, p. 158.

128 Zvar Jiyerji [1721], transl. Hintlian 2001, p. 43; Hanna Vardapet 1727 [1807], pp. 283–284.

129 Rocchetta 1630, p. 262.

130 Baldi 1919; Collin 1948; Baldi 1954; Collin 1956; Wardi 1975; Peri 2001, p. 97–160; Klimas 2012, pp. 82–86; Degout 2013; Hitzel 2013.

131 Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], p. 485.

132 Bagatti 1952, p. 125; Degout/Charles-Gaffiot 2013, pp. 174–175.

133 Zvar Jiveryi, transl. Hintlian 2001, p. 43.



75 | Entrance to the Nativity cave from the south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem

ownership of the upper church and the authorization to keep the keys to the grotto, even if the Friars were enabled to maintain their rights over the Manger and the nearby Altar of the Magi, and the door opening onto the underground corridor was not walled up. The Greeks promoted a new redecoration of the church: the nave was newly paved, the bema was provided with a solemn iconostasis and a wooden baldachin was erected to house the main altar.¹³⁴ Probably at the same time, or slightly later, the entrance to the Nativity cave [FIG. 75] was decorated with a wooden screen, looking much like the *epistylion* of an iconostasis displaying the twelve liturgical feasts of the Orthodox Church (*Dodekaorton*).¹³⁵ The eastern end was provided with new lamps hanging from chains, the lower ends of which were decorated with ceramic egg-shaped spheres bearing alpha and omega symbols [FIG. 78]: such objects, used to prevent mice from running down the chains, were manufactured in the famous ceramic workshops of Kütahya, in Turkey, which were mostly run by Greek and Armenian entrepreneurs.¹³⁶

A door was opened, or perhaps re-opened, in the south apse, to enable the Greek monks to access the church directly from their

lodgings.¹³⁷ Shortly thereafter, in 1779, a massive buttress was erected close to the main entrance to support the façade.¹³⁸ In the grotto no significant alterations took place, even if efforts were made, in vain, to remove the silver star bearing a Latin inscription. The niche of Jesus' birthplace was covered with a curtain embroidered in gold and silver, which was opened only at the request of worshippers, probably with the aim of enhancing their desire to contemplate the holy spot.¹³⁹ Attempts were made to hang similar textiles also in front of the Manger, eliciting the Friars' anger.¹⁴⁰ The Friars, in their turn, made a very systematic use of images to visualize the events commemorated. Paintings were by then set on display in each of the holy sites commemorated in the northern grottoes and more were to be seen in the Nativity cave, following Italian and Spanish models.¹⁴¹ The number of lamps, sent as gifts by the major European powers, rose to forty-four.¹⁴² Nevertheless, most pilgrims, including a number of Protestant, especially British, visitors, were much more eager to pay attention to the tiny dimensions, darkness, and natural rocky appearance of the places, all elements which they frequently understood as evidence for their authenticity. In a sense, the decay and disappearance of Crusader ornaments was appreciated, inasmuch as it revealed the original scenery of the events narrated by Luke and Matthew. As the Anglican priest Nathanael Burton observed in 1837:

134 Papadopoulos 1910 [2010], p. 539; Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 203.

135 The new setting of the entrance to the Nativity cave is first reproduced in a sketch by David Roberts, already published by Laborde 1837, pl. 75, Fig. 160. Cf. also, for the original watercolor, Bianucci 2005, p. 80.

136 Narkiss 1979, p. 133.

137 Maximos of Simi [ca. 1810], ed. Papadopoulos-Keramevs 1891–1898, III, p. 77.

138 Papadopoulos 1900, p. 159; Themelis 1923, p. 397.

139 Binos 1787, p. 158.

140 Castellani 1922, p. 138, doc. 1012.

141 João de Jesus Christo 1822, pp. 111–113; Buckingham 1821, pp. 218–219; Chateaubriand 1839, pp. 310–311, 313.

142 João de Jesus Christo 1822, p. 114. In general on royal gifts to the Holy Sites in the modern period cf. Degout/Charles-Gaffiot 2013.

[...] we passed through the Greek and Latin chapels (for in such places as this, and the Holy Sepulchre, all concur in their acknowledgment of their identity with the original scene), which, to me, is a strong proof of their authenticity... we descended by some steps, and entered an extensive apartment, whose pillars, walls, and roof were the natural rock. I conceive it too capacious to have been the work of imposture; it certainly had the appearance of a place which may have originally served as a stable; two or three of the stalls are still visible.¹⁴³

Also many Catholic pilgrims perceived the extant ornaments of the caves as irritating hindrances to a deeper experience of the holy sites:

Why this so holy manger has not preserved its simple character? – wondered Count Joseph d’Estourmel in 1844 – I regretted the nude rock, the rustic nature of the stall. These curtains, which make it look like a drawing-room, are they really useful for anything else than sheltering the plague? Ornaments are here out of place: the rough stones would be more significant for hearts, and eyes would have nothing to lose.¹⁴⁴

The partition of the holy sites led to a more and more sensible and clashing juxtaposition of décors belonging to different patterns of church decoration and mirroring distinctive and culturally bound approaches to the holy. In 1813 Sultan Mahmud II granted the Armenians ownership of the north transept, which was transformed, for the first time, into a separate and self-contained sacred space.¹⁴⁵ It was probably in the aftermath of the Sultan’s firman that the ancient altars of the Magi and the Virgin Mary |PLAN I. A, B| were redecorated with paintings, liturgical vessels and other ornaments typical of Armenian tradition |FIG. 79|. This encouraged the Greeks to provide the central apse, the south transept and the nave with new décors. The monks, who in 1820 had

erected a new monastery and a hospice for pilgrims close to the old tower, were eager to set up new visual indicators of Orthodoxy in the church sections under their direct control.¹⁴⁶ This need for reshaping was made urgent by the earthquake that ravaged the basilica in 1834 and probably caused the fall of much of the surviving portions of mosaics, which, as reported by many pilgrims, had started coming off since at least the 15th century. According to Franciscan sources, parts of the synods and councils, as well as portions the Tree of Jesse, were removed by the Greeks during the refurbishing of the church in the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, many large fragments were apparently still preserved during Mariti’s visit in 1767, and it is possible that they quickly deteriorated in the following decades.¹⁴⁸ A French traveler, in 1832, reported that some mosaics had intentionally been detached from the walls of the north transept shortly before his visit.¹⁴⁹

Restorations took place only in 1842, after the Ottomans had reestablished their rule over Palestine after years of war against the Khedive of Egypt. The Greek Orthodox were granted the right to make repairs and renovations to the whole of the building, including the Armenian transept: maintenance was made to the roof, the floor was repaved, the windows were provided with new irons and glass, the arches of the three apses were decorated with a black and white ribbon interlacing with foliate motifs, each one including, from north to south, a chalice, a cross, and a pyx.

143 Burton 1838, pp. 125–126.

144 D’Estourmel 1844, II, p. 128.

145 Antreassian 1977, pp. 48–49; cf. Papadopoulos 1900, p. 297; Themelis 1923, p. 397.

146 Themelis 1923, p. 398.

147 Pietro Antonio da Venezia 1715, p. 195.

148 Bacci 2015, p. 49.

149 Cornille 1836, p. 357. During his visit in 1827, the French artist Léon de Laborde made sketches of a column mural, a detail of the Incredulity and one of the nave angels: Laborde 1837, pl. 75, Fig. 161. David Roberts’ watercolor (Bianucci 2005, p. 80) shows a continuous row of mosaics in the transepts, which was probably the outcome of his imagination.



76 | Devotional paintings on the choir columns and the iconostasis, Nativity church, Bethlehem, ca. 1853

The lower walls, in the transepts as in the nave, were covered with thick plaster and the extant portions of mosaics were included within rectangular-shaped frames, which made them look much like monumental icons. As denounced by the Franciscans, some of the Latin inscriptions – most notably those in the north transept – were scraped off.¹⁵⁰

In the rather turbulent years that followed, the tension between the three Bethlehem communities became explosive. If Latins and Armenians regarded the restorations as an abuse of power on the part of the Greeks, who were backed at the Sublime Porte by the Russian tsar, the Greeks were greatly irritated by Catholic activism in the Holy Land: France, the power which had held since the seventeenth century the protectorate over Latin Christians in Palestine, established a consulate in Jerusalem in 1843 and Pope Pius IX reestablished the Latin Patriarchate in 1847. In that same year, the Greeks stole the silver star-shaped frame of the



77 | Russian artist, Lunette-shaped icon with the Nativity, south transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 1860

hole of Christ's birth with its Latin inscription bearing witness to Franciscan rights on the holy spot, and transported it to Mar Saba monastery. The Friars, backed by the French government who sent a special envoy in 1850, raised an energetic protest with local and central Ottoman authorities. The occasion was exploited by General Jacques Aupick, by then minister plenipotentiary of France in Constantinople, to request, with the restitution of the star, also the reestablishment of Franciscan rights as defined by the last French-Ottoman agreement, dating from 1740. Such claims gave rise to the complaints of tsar Nicholas I of Russia, who put pressure on the Sublime Porte to preserve the *status quo*. Shortly before Christmas 1852, Sultan Abdülmecid I granted new concessions to the Latins and replaced the star at his own expenses:

150 Bacci 2015, pp. 49–50.

in reaction to this, Russian divisions were deployed along the Danube. Two subsequent firmans reestablishing the *status quo* on the Holy Sites were issued in 1852 and again in 1853 in an attempt to avert the Russian invasion. The document confirmed the properties and rights of the three communities as they were at that time and asserted the principles that the latter could not be altered: this implied also that all repairs or renovations involving the whole of the building could take place only with a mutual agreement of each religious group. Even if this policy confirmed Greek Orthodox primacy, Russia did not stop its plans to invade the Ottoman Empire: France, Great Britain and Piedmont decided to side with Turkey to fight in the so-called War of Crimea (1854–1856), which ended with the tsar's defeat. Nevertheless, no attempts were made at reestablishing previous Latin rights over the holy places and the *status quo* was confirmed by the treaty of Paris (1856), as well as by the subsequent agreements signed in Berlin (1878) and Versailles (1919).¹⁵¹

In the immediate aftermath of the Sultan's firmans, the south transept, which was now also known as the Chapel of Saint Nicholas, underwent major renovations aimed at stressing Greek Orthodox ownership. In 1853, the Bishop of Bethlehem Dionysios financed the gilding of the iconostasis.¹⁵² The altar of Circumcision (now known as altar of Saint Nicholas) was also provided with an elegant gilded baldachin, and mural paintings were displayed on the four corner columns of the choir [FIG. 76]. A number of further icons, now preserved in the chapel of Saint George, were also given to the church in the same year 1853. In 1860, a lunette-shaped icon displaying the Nativity [FIG. 77] was set on display in the niche of Christ's birthplace: curiously enough, it was a Russian work painted in an Italianate style and representing Mary and Joseph kneeling in adoration of the Child, according to the Renaissance scheme inspired by St Birgitta's vision.¹⁵³ In the same

period, attempts were also made to promote public worship of an icon of the Virgin Mary, which was probably the work of an eighteenth-century Arab Melkite painter from Aleppo.¹⁵⁴

Further renovations took place, in the course of time, in the properties of the three communities, whereas the shared spaces of the Nativity cave and the church were frozen in the shape received after the 1842 restorations. Nonetheless, the *status quo* was infringed at least three times. For fear that the eighteenth-century tapestries bearing French lilies and the Custody's coats-of-arms, which were hanging in the Nativity cave, may be thoroughly worn away, the Franciscans asked for permission to substitute them. The Greeks firmly opposed this initiative and, in 1869, a fire in the grotto destroyed all Latin furnishings, including the curtains that were substituted in 1872 with new ones made by the Orthodox. The intervention of France, backed by the Ottoman Sultan, resulted in the latter's removal and substitution with a Latin textile. In reaction to this, the Greek monks entered the holy site and tore out the new curtains. Yet, the action was self-defeating, given that the Sublime Porte authorized the Friars to set up a fireproof asbestos tapestry, decorated with scenes of Christ's infancy and French lilies [FIG. 6], sent at his personal expense by the president of France, Patrice MacMahon.¹⁵⁵

The second derogation of the *status quo* took place in 1918, a year after the establishment of the British mandate over Palestine, when the military governor of Jerusalem, Colonel Ronald Storrs, gave orders to demolish the wall screen separating the choir from the nave,

151 Charles-Roux 1930, pp. 171–172; Collin 1956, pp. 47–50; Cohen 2011; Hitzel 2013, pp. 84–85; Vauchez 2013, p. 51.

152 Themelis 1923, p. 406.

153 *Ibidem*, p. 409.

154 *Birthplace of Jesus* 2011, p. 72. A Palestinian school of icon painting emerged only in the second half of the nineteenth century and was partly involved in enhancing the décor of the Bethlehem church: cf. Boullata 2009, pp. 41–103.

155 Vincent/Abel 1914, p. 204; Hamilton 1947, p. 88; Cohen 2011, pp. 93–94.

which he thought to have been erected by the Greeks in 1842: actually he was wrong, given that the structure dated to at least the times of Dositheos' reconstruction and probably incorporated parts of the Crusader chancels.¹⁵⁶ The third and final infringement occurred with Harvey's and Hamilton's archaeological excavations in 1934, which led to the rediscovery of the fourth-century mosaic floor, parts of which were left visible below wooden trapdoors in the nave and the north transept.

For the rest, the history of the Nativity church in the late nineteenth and twentieth century is basically that of a long decay, manifested especially by the increasing darkening of its monumental ornaments. As even ordinary maintenance was made difficult by the *status quo* impasse, the extant Crusader mosaics and the decorations of the cave were more and more darkened and no concrete solution was found to prevent the seepages of water from affecting the roof. As a matter of fact, the pilgrims' emotional approach to the holy site was starkly influenced by this unassuming appearance.

¹⁵⁶ Storrs 1936, pp. 352–353.

Epilogue



During many centuries, the Bethlehem basilica was perceived as one of the rare *loca sancta* where pilgrims were constantly enabled to experience two basically different forms of approach to the divine: firstly, when entering the upper church, reserved for performance of liturgical rites, they were confronted with a magnificent scenery which glorified God, hinted at the heavenly, supernatural dimension, and worked as a sort of monumental frame, or a liminal, intermediate space introducing visitors to their access to the authentic holy site. The holy sites, by contrast, were located in the underground cave, invested with maternal symbolism and egregious for their diminutive and dark appearance, clashing with the sumptuousness of the above building: this was the second, very different, form of approach to the divine. Pious visitors were invited to address their prayers to cult objects deemed to be grasped through the soil: in front of them, pilgrims could feel themselves involved in a more direct, even more physical relationship with the holy ones by force of their own prostrations and meditational practice. Hallowed by contact with Christ's body, the holy spots



78 | Ceramic egg,
Nativity church,
Bethlehem,
18th century

were deemed not only to work as visual indicators of events having taken place in a distant past, which could be evoked and reconstructed in one's devotional experience, but also to manifest the enduring presence of God's special grace. The holiness of the cave was said to be strictly site-bound and all attempts at appropriating, apportioning, translating or multiplying it could but take place in a synecdochical or *pars-pro-toto* form, by cutting off fragments of its rocky surface, through a figurative ersatz as in the case of the altar image set on display in the underground corridor by the Franciscans in the seventeenth century, or even in a topomimetic way, by more or less accurately reproducing the cave setting in another, even far-away location.

The different architectural, spatial and decoration strategies worked out in the course of time aimed to harmonize the intrinsic tension between these two basic, and to some extent alternative

ways of experiencing the divine dimension: one more immediate, intimate, and site-specific, manifesting memorial meanings and encouraging visitors to perceive themselves as spectators of the birth of Jesus, and the other associated with collective participation in the Eucharistic reenactment of the Son of God's Incarnation. The ways in which the relationship between the two came to be negotiated and put on stage was often ambiguous from the very moment when, in the fourth century, a monumental building was superimposed on the underground cave. Constantine's octagon encouraged pilgrims to acknowledge the extraordinary status of Christ's birthplace and, at the same time, made attempts at orientating and controlling the pilgrims' practice of worship, if it proves true that they were invited to peep down through the *oculus*, rather than directly entering the Nativity cave. Justinian's architects transformed the church into a more coherent ritual space and the grotto was made fully accessible: this implied its use for individual prayers, but also its involvement in some liturgical rites. The upper space, reserved for liturgical activity, was not invested with any memorial meanings and the spatial setting concurred to emphasize the underground location of the cultic foci: the raised *bema* platform signaled the vertical correspondence of Christ's birthplace with the upper altar and the latter was thus implicitly described as a functional surrogate of the birthplace.

The coming of Islam implied the re-negotiation of Bethlehem's identity as a shared hall of prayer: most significantly, the newcomers did not appropriate the cave itself, which they regarded, to some extent, as a memorial site invested with divine, extraordinary qualities. Muslims appropriated a portion of the upper sacred space, located in the vicinity of the grotto and oriented toward Mecca, for use as a hall of prayer reserved for Islamic worship. Its decoration established a visual dialogue stressing both the equal or superior dignity of this space and its distinctiveness vis-à-vis

the rest of the building: the same medium – mosaic – was selected to embellish its walls, whereas specific Islamic forms – inscriptions instead of images – were purposefully set on display.

The sumptuous *mise-en-scène* promoted by the Crusaders in co-operation with the Byzantine emperor in the 1160s managed to reassert Christian worship. Given the involvement of the highest civil and religious authorities in patronage, the initiative was also bound to be invested with political meanings and the highly unconventional mosaic program decorating the church walls indicate that efforts were made to find some common ground which might be representative of both Latin and Greek liturgical and theological traditions. Anyway, the most important outcome was the creation of a new efficacious frame to the site-bound sanctity of the place. In the 1160s, the upper space and the cave were attributed a similar appearance, inasmuch as they were both reveted with the same glittering medium, namely an uninterrupted mosaic surface combined with polished marble plaques. Not unlike the church, the grotto was provided with a coherent figurative décor: the Nativity displayed in the apse of the east niche visualized the Gospel events memorialized in the holy site, whereas the vault was possibly decorated with scenes of Christ's infancy. In other words, the image working as cultic focus was framed by a cycle of narratives in a way reminiscent of solutions employed in the decoration of Romanesque crypts, where the apse image with the iconic portrait of a saint was not seldom combined with stories taken from his or her hagiography.¹ The natural appearance of the material cave was hidden behind this figurative setting, which strongly influenced the experience of pilgrims, inasmuch as it encouraged them to combine the pious inspection of the site with a meditation on the images embellishing it and representing the earliest moments of the Son of God's path on earth.

Such attempts at more directly correlating the holy site with the ritual space above and nuancing the latter's distinctiveness vis-à-vis



79 | Altar of the Magi with Armenian vasa sacra and ornaments, north transept, Nativity church, Bethlehem

the former were basically fruitless, given that, in the aftermath of Saladin's conquest, the basilica underwent a gradual process of internal partition among the different Christian denominations which were given properties of altars and church portions in the course of time. The association of the Nativity cave with the *bema* along a vertical axis was deprived of much of its symbolic pregnancy after the side-altars were transformed into alternative foci of liturgical performance, and even more in the Ottoman period, when ritual activity in the east end tended to be minimal. It was perhaps not by chance that, in the meantime, the memorial qualities originally confined to the underground dimension began to intrude into the upper church, where the same side-altars were identified as markers of secondary events within the Nativity scenery.

1 | Bacci 2016c.

The integrated church space conceived in Crusader times and shaped by its unifying decorative program was contradicted especially by the Islamic appropriation of the nave in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its use as both a hall of prayer and a profane room, and its separation from the east end through a high and thick walled screen. In the late seventeenth century, when the Greeks succeeded in expelling Muslims from the church and restoring the nave to its liturgical function, attempts were made at making the whole space suitable for the Orthodox rite, also by means of its restyling with an iconostasis and other specific furnishings. Nevertheless, this action was hampered first by the Franciscan recovery of their former properties in 1690 and later by the Armenian appropriation of the north transept, which was transformed into a sort of autonomous church, exclusively reserved for that Christian denomination. In reaction to such developments, the corresponding south transept was provided with décors visualizing its association with Byzantine-rite tradition.

The many efforts made by the different communities to provide the cave with ornaments corresponding to each one's distinctive patterns of church decoration – such as lamps of specific shapes, sumptuous curtains, Byzantinizing icons and devotional paintings of Western taste – were frustrated by the increasing emphasis laid by pilgrims on the materiality of the holy cave, which was revealed not only by the portions of rock still visible, but also by the irreversible decay and darkening of its ancient ornaments. Furthermore, the grotto was enriched with new holy spots and was itself included into a wider, expanded topography of the Basilica and its immediate neighborhoods. The Friars strongly engaged in promoting worship for the northern caves, as well as the holy sites located in the wider region of Bethlehem. Christ's birthplace was thought to be at the very center of a multilayered network of horizontal relations with further site-bound phenomena of memorialization

dotting the area. Pilgrims, who mostly reached Bethlehem after visiting the Holy City, could not resist comparing the site of Nativity with that of the Lord's death and resurrection. As remarked, among others, by the Franciscan friar João de Jesus Christo in 1817:

This one is really the most devout site in all the Holy Land, whence the soul receives the highest favours and graces... Certainly the holy sites of Jerusalem are also devout enough, yet they evoke only gloomy ideas and sad scenes... On the contrary, everything in this site smells of merriment: all those who enter the place with pious intentions are reminded that a Childgod was born there and gave his cries: bathed with tears, they cannot prevent themselves from having a feeling of tenderness and love.²

In many respects, the Holy Sepulchre and the Nativity church constituted the two major goals for pilgrims in the Judaeon heights: they complemented each other, yet they implied two thoroughly different, even mutually exclusive forms of devotional experience. The road connecting Jerusalem to Bethlehem was accordingly invested with very special meanings: inasmuch as it corresponded to the itinerary followed by Joseph and Mary and shortly later by the Magi, it was perceived as an authoritative model to imitate. The believers' joyful path to Christ's childbirth was accordingly dotted with multiple material indicators of both Gospel events and Biblical episodes viewed as prefigurations of the Son of God's messianic role.

Perhaps the most elusive of such horizontal relations concerns the ways in which the Nativity church interacted with its annexes and the nearby village.³ For many centuries, Bethlehem was

² João de Jesus-Christo 1822, p. 144.

³ For a general survey of Bethlehem's urban history cf. Revault/Santelli/Weill-Rochant 1997; Sahouri 2014.



80 | Nocturnal view of the Manger Square with the Mosque of 'Umar during Ramadan.

nothing more than a small hamlet, the history of which is still scarcely investigated. The Nativity complex stood out for its imposing dimensions, clashing with the modest appearance of the surrounding natural and urban landscapes. It was only in the Ottoman period that a new built up area started to develop on the hill to the west of the church, including quarters inhabited by both Christians and Muslims. Monastic life was also gradually enhanced, first with the Franciscans' settling in the fourteenth century, then with the reconstruction of the Armenian monastery in the eighteenth century and finally with the establishment of a new, wider residential structure for the Greek monks in the nineteenth century. From the end of the Crimean war a number of new religious institutions were allowed to erect their dependences and churches in the village: these included not only non-Franciscan convents, such as that of the Carmelite nuns founded in 1876 by Sister Mariam Baouardy Haddam, and the new Salesian school established in 1885, but also buildings belonging to other confessions, such as the Lutheran Christmas Church located on the top of the western hill along

the present-day Paul VI Street.⁴ Analogous initiatives were promoted by the Oriental Christians, as in the case of the Syriac Orthodox church erected in the late 1920s by migrants escaping persecutions in Turkey.⁵

The Muslim community increased especially after 1948, when many Palestinian refugees from the territories occupied by the Israeli army settled in the village, suddenly transforming it into a town. In 1954, under Jordanian rule, the area facing the basilica to the west was thoroughly reshaped: this implied the creation of a large square delimited by a covered portico to the south, the administrative center to the north, and the Mosque to the west |FIG. 80|. The Mosque had been originally erected in 1860 and significantly dedicated to the memory of Caliph 'Umar, who had performed his prayers at the Nativity site: to some extent, the building, which was thoroughly reconstructed in 1954, functioned in its turn as a memorial site, encouraging worshippers to imitate Muhammad's successor in his pious behavior before Prophet Īsa's birthplace. The new town planning intentionally aimed at staging the direct association of the two buildings: the Mosque was provided with a new *mise-en-scène*, emphasizing its location just opposite the basilica, by the demolition of the built structures standing before it.⁶

With its tall minaret, the Mosque of 'Umar has become a major landmark in present times. At night, especially during Ramadan, its green neon lights compete with those erected on the roofs of the Armenian monastery and the Franciscan convent, and all prayer performed there proves to be just one of the many giving shape to Bethlehem's distinctive soundscape. In many respects, it can be considered to be a late offspring or external extension of the space reserved for the performance of ritual activity that since the fourth

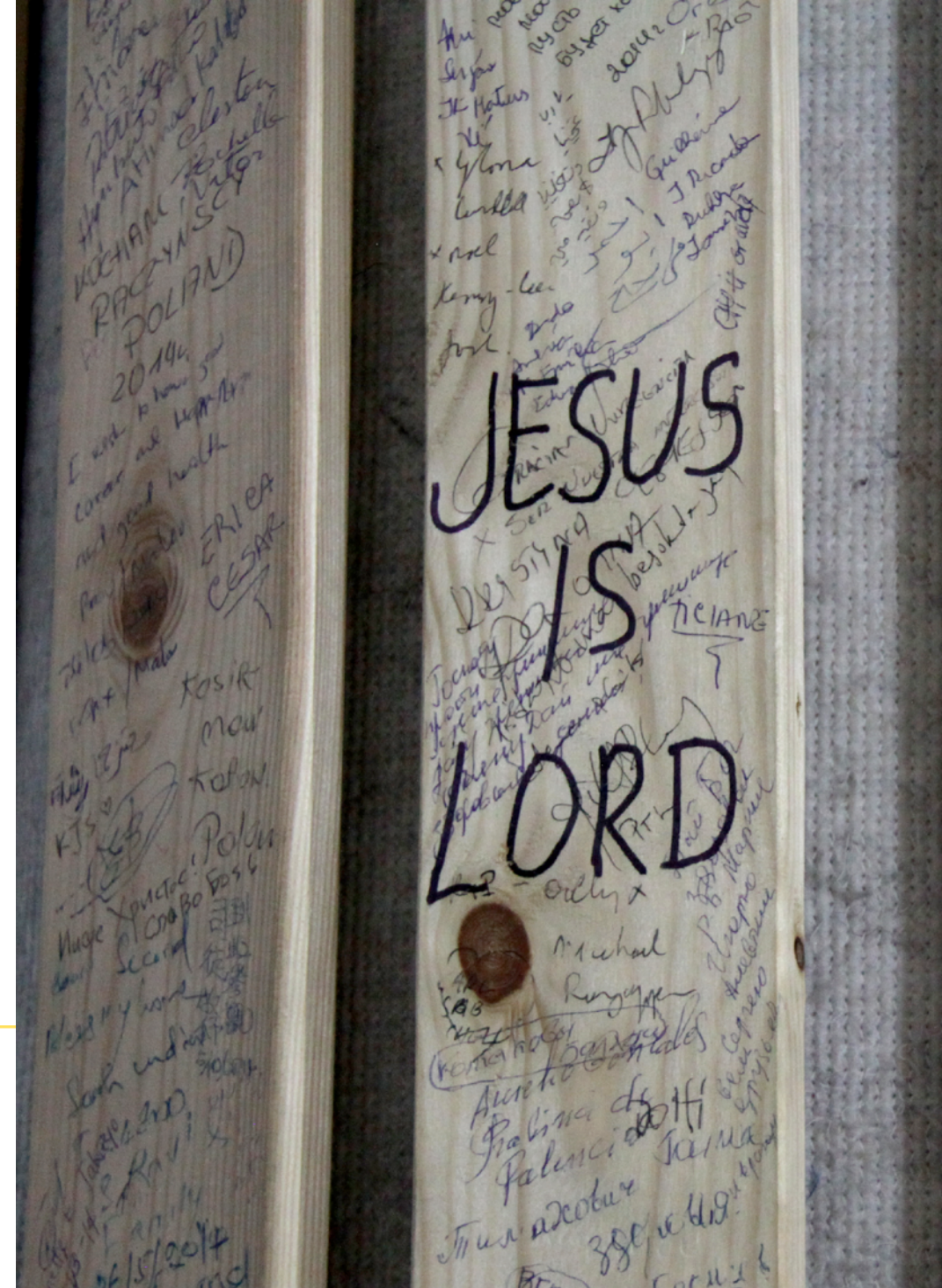
4 Kildani 2010, pp. 405–408, 558; cf. also Raheb/Strickert 1998, p. 47.

5 Raheb/Strickert 1998, p. 48.

6 Weill-Rochant 1997, pp. 19, 28.

century has provided a frame and a passageway to the mystic cave. At the same time, it establishes an alternative religious pole, to some extent challenging the dominant role and cultic authority of the Christian shrine.

In these last years the basilica has entered a new phase of its centuries-old life. It can be assumed that, once the restorations come to an end, the upper church will play a much greater role in the experience of visitors and pilgrims, who will once again be able to sense the dimensional and aesthetic gap between the bright basilica glittering with sumptuous ornaments and the tiny, dark, underground cave. In the meanwhile, perhaps for the first time since Constantine's era, the cave plays a role of absolute protagonist: as the nave and transepts are concealed behind scaffoldings, their decorations and sceneries are mostly prevented from having any impact on visitors thronging before the south entrance to enter the holy grotto. The sacred space of the basilica, deprived of its décors, is presently invested with no other purpose than as an empty surface where tokens of one's worship can be set on display: it took just a few months for the wooden covers used to protect the nave columns to be thoroughly inscribed with pilgrims' names, prayers and requests for salvation | FIG. 81 |. The church is basically perceived – now as not infrequently also in the times past – as a sort of *non-lieu*, a transitory space or passageway, the only merit of which is, in the end, its capacity to work as a monumental threshold enabling human access to an outstanding *locus sanctus* imbued with divine grace.



81 | Modern graffiti on the wooden covers of the nave columns, Nativity church, Bethlehem, 2015

Bibliography

SOURCES

ADAMNÁN OF IONA, *De locis sanctis*, ed. Ludwig Bieler, in Geyer [et al.] 1965, pp. 183–234.

ADÉMAR OF CHABANNES, *Chronicon*, ed. Delisle 1840–1904, vol. x, pp. 144–165.

ADORNO, ANSELMO, *Itinerarium Terrae Sanctae* [1470–1471], ed. Jacques Heers, Georgette de Groer, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adornes en Terre Sainte (1470–1471)*, Paris 1978.

ALBERIC OF TROIS-FONTAINES, *Chronicon* [1232–1241], ed. Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, *Chronica Alberici monachi Trium Fontium a monacho Novi Monasterii Hoiensis interpolata*, Hannover 1874 (Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptorum Tomus xxii), vol. 23, pp. 631–950.

ALBERT OF AACHEN, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. Recueil no 1844–1895, vol. iv, pp. 271–713. English translation by Susan B. Edgington, *Albert of Aachen's History of the Journey to Jerusalem. Volume 1: Books 1–6. The First Crusade, 1095–1099*, Farnham 2013.

ALESSANDRO DI FILIPPO RINUCCINI, *Sanctissimo peregrinaggio del Sancto Sepolcro 1474*, ed. A. Calamai, Pisa 1993.

AL-HARAWĪ, ABŪ'L-ḤASAN 'ALĪ B. ABĪ BAKR, *Guide to the Pilgrimage Sites*, transl. Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, mort à Alep en 611/1215. Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, Damas 1957.

ALLATII ANONYMOUS, *Ἀπόδειξις περὶ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. cxxxiii, cols 973–990.

ANONYMOUS OF FLORENNES, *Brevis narratio belli sacri* [ca. 1125], ed. Recueil no 1844–1895, vol. v, pp. 371–373.

ARSENIOS, *Προσκυνητάριον*, ed. G. Mavrommantes, G. Arvanitakes, *Προσκυνητάριον Ἀρσενίου (1512–1520)*, Alexandria 1899.

BERNHARD THE MONK, *Itinerarium* [ca. 860], ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, vol. i, pp. 307–320.

BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN, *Revelaciones*, ed. Carl Gustav Undhagen, Birger Bergh, *Revelaciones Sanctae Birgittae*, Uppsala 1967–1991.

BORDEAUX ANONYMOUS, ed. Paul Geyer, Otto Cuntz, *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, in Geyer [et al.] 1965, pp. 1–26.

CATALAN ANONYMOUS [1323], ed. Joseph Pijoan, “Un nou viatge a Terra Santa en català”, *Anuari de l'Institut d'estudis catalans* (1907), pp. 307–384.

CENNINO CENNINI, *Il libro dell'arte*, ed. Franco Brunello, Vicenza 1998.

CHARLES DE LA RIVIÈRE, *Pèlerinage en Terre Sainte* [1507], ed. Françoise Pouge, *Édition commentée du pèlerinage en Terre Sainte, fait en 1507 par Charles de la Rivière*, Master thesis (Université François Rabelais de Tours), 2 vols, Tours 1976.

CHESNAU, JEAN, *Le Voyage de Monsieur d'Armon, ambassadeur pour le Roy en Levant* [1549], ed. Charles Schefer, Paris 1887.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catecheses*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. xxxiii, cols 331–1128.

CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Life of John the Hesychast*, ed. Schwartz 1939, pp. 201–222.

CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Life of Saint Sabas*, ed. Schwartz 1939, pp. 85–200.

DANIEL THE HIGOUMEN, *Житие и хождение* [ca. 1106–1108], ed. Klaus Dieter Seemann, *Khodzhenie – Wallfahrtsbericht. Igumen Daniil. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von Venevitinov 1883/85 mit einer Einleitung und bibliographischem Hinweisen von Klaus Dieter Seemann*, Munich 1970, pp. 63–66.

DANIEL, METROPOLITAN OF EPHEBUS, *Διήγησις*, ed. Gabriel Destounis, “Διήγησις Δανιὴλ Μητροπολίτου Ἐφέσου καὶ Περίοδος τῶν Ἀγίων Τόπων”, *Православный Палестинский Сборник*, iii/2 (1884), pp. 1–23.

DE SITU URBIS IERUSALEM, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. ii, pp. 73–118.

EGERIA, *Itinerarium*, ed. Ezio Franceschini and Robert Weber, in Geyer [et al.] 1965, pp. 37–90.

ENGLISH ANONYMOUS [ca. 1350], ed. J. H. Bernhard, *Guide-Book to Palestine (ca. 1350)*, (Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, vol. vi), London 1894.

EPIPHANIUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Description of the Holy Land*, ed. Herbert Donner, “Die Palästina-Beschreibung des Epiphanius Monachus Hagiopolita”, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, lxxxviii (1971), pp. 42–91.

EREMIA ĆĖLĖPI K'ĖŌMIWRĈEAN, *Tabula chorographica Armenica*, ed. Gabriella Uluhogian, *Un'antica mappa dell'Armenia. Monasteri e santuari dal I al XVII secolo*, Ravenna 2000.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, Berlin 1975; English transl. by Averil Cameron, Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, Oxford 1999.

EUSEBIUS, *Demonstratio evangelica*, ed. Ivar A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke*, vol. vi, Leipzig 1913.

EUTYCHIOS, PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA, *Nazm al-Jawhar*, ed. Michael Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 471), Leuven 1985.

FELIX FABRI, *Evagatorium* [1480, 1483], ed. Konrad Dietrich Hassler, *Fratrīs Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationes*, Stuttgart 1843–1849.

FULCHER OF CHARTRES, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. Recueil no 1844–1895, vol. iii, pp. 311–599.

GERMANOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia mystagogica*, ed. F. E. Brightmann, “The *Historia Mystagogica* and Other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, ix (1908), pp. 248–267, 387–397.

GEROLD OF JERUSALEM, *Letter to Pope Gregory IX*, February 29th, 1229, ed. Pertz/Rodenberg 1883, vol. i, pp. 297–298.

GIOVANNI DI FEDANZOLA [ca. 1330–1335], ed. Ugolino Nicolini, Renzo Nelli, Sabino De Sandoli, Eugenio Alliata, John Boettcher, Attilio

Bartoli Langeli, Alviero Niccacci, *Fra Giovanni di Fedanzola da Perugia. Descriptio Terrae Sanctae. Ms. Casanatense 3876*, Jerusalem 2003.

GOSPEL OF PSEUDO-MATTHEW, ed. Tischendorf 1876, pp. 51–112.

GREGORY OF TOURS, *De gloria martyrum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *Gregorii Turonensis opera*, (Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum i), Hannover 1885, vol. ii/2, pp. 34–111.

GUYLFORDE, RICHARD [1506], ed. H. Ellis, *The Pilgrimage of Sir Richard Gylforde to the Holy Land, A.D. 1506*, London 1851.

HONORIUS III, *Letter to the Doge of Venice* [1204], ed. Aloysius L. Tautu, *Acta Honorii III et Gregorii IX*, (Pontificia Commissio ad redigendum codicem iuris canonici orientalis. Fontes, Series 3), Rome 1950, pp. 187–188.

HORN, ELZEAR [1721], ed. Eugene Hoade, Bellarmino Bagatti, *Ichnographiae Monumentorum Terrae Sanctae (1724–1744)*, Jerusalem 1962.

HUGEBURC, *Life of Saint Willibald*, ed. Tobler/Molinier 1877–1885, vol. i, pp. 241–297.

HUMBERT DE DIJON, *Liber de locis et conditionibus Terrae Sanctae*, ed. Thomas Kaeppli, Pierre Benoît, “Un pèlerinage dominicain inédit du XIVE siècle, le *Liber de locis et conditionibus Terrae sanctae et Sepulchro d'Humbert de Dijon O.P. (1332)*”, *Revue biblique*, lxii (1955), pp. 516–540.

HYACINTH, *Descriptio terrae sanctae*, ed. Wilkinson 1977, p. 205; ed. Zacarías García Villada, “Descripciones desconocidas de Tierra Santa en codices españoles, II: Descripción del presbítero Jacinto”, *Estudios eclesiásticos*, iv (1925), pp. 322–324; ed. J. Campos, “Otro texto de latín medieval hispano. El presbítero Iachintus”, *Helmantica*, viii (1957), pp. 77–89.

IBN AL-FIRKAH, *Kitāb Bā'ith an-Nufūs ilā ziyārat al-Quds al-Mahrūs* [The Book of Arousing Souls to Visit Jerusalem's Holy Walls],

transl. Charles D. Matthews, *Palestine-Mohammedan Holy Land*, New Haven 1949, pp. 1–42.

IBN BAṬṬŪṬA, MUHAMMAD [ca. 1325–1354], transl. Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A. D. 1325–1354. Translated with Revisions and Notes from the Arabic Text edited by C. DeFrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti*, London 1958–1971.

IBN KHALDŪN, *Al-Taʿrif bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa riḥlatihī gharban was sharqan*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Taḳwīt al-Ṭanjī, Cairo 1951.

INNOMINATUS III, *Haec est via ad Terram Sanctam* [ca. 1187–1229], ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. III, pp. 17–22.

INNOMINATUS V, *De locis sanctis et populis et bestiis in Palaestina vitam degentibus*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. III, pp. 29–44.

JAMES OF VERONA [1335], ed. Ugo Monneret de Villard, *Liber Peregrinationis di Jacopo da Verona*, Rome 1950.

JEROME, *Epistulae*, ed. Isidor Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, Vienna 1996.

JEROME, *Epitaphium sanctae Paulae*, ed. Cain 2013, pp. 41–97.

JEROME, *Homilia de nativitate Domini*, ed. Germain Morin, *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera. Pars II. Homiletica*, (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 78), Turnhout 1958.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homily on blessed Philogonius*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. XLVIII, cols 747–756.

JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Third Homily on the Holy Images*, ed. Bonifatius Kotter, *Contra imaginum calumniatorum orationes tres*, (Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos 3), Berlin/New York 1975.

JOHN OF WÜRZBURG [ca. 1160], ed. Huygens 1994, pp. 79–138.

JOHN PHOKAS, *Ἐκφρασις τῶν Ἀγίων Τόπων*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. CXXXIII, cols 927–961.

JUSTIN MARTYR, *Dialogue with Tryphon*, ed. Philippe Bobichon, *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec Tryphon. Édition critique, traduction, commentaire*, Fribourg 2003.

KOOTWIJCK, JAN [Johannes Cotovicus], *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum*, Antwerp 1619.

LETTER OF THE THREE PATRIARCHS, ed. Joseph A. Munitiz, Julian Chrysostomides, Eirene Harvalia-Crook, Charalambos Dendrinis, *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus and Related Texts*, Camberley 1997.

LIONARDO FRESCOBALDI, *Viaggio in Terrasanta* [1384], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990, pp. 167–215.

LIST OF INDULGENCES [late 14th century], ed. De Castro 1957, pp. 443–486.

LO ITINERARIO DE ANDARE IN HYERUSALEM [1469], ed. Pier Giorgio Longo, *Lo itinerario de andare in Hyerusalem (1469) – Loca sancta visitanda in partibus Jerusalem. Ms. G 10 – Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile di Casale Monferrato, Ponzano Monferrato 2007*.

LOUPVENT, NICOLAS [1531], ed. Jean-Paul Bonnin, *Le pèlerinage à Jérusalem de Dom Loupvent – manuscript de 1531*, Master thesis (Université François Rabelais of Tours), Tours 1976.

LUDOLPH OF SÜDHEIM, *De itinere Terrae Sanctae* [1336–1341], ed. Ferdinand Deycks, Stuttgart 1851.

MARIANO DA SIENA [1431], ed. Paolo Pirillo, *Mariano da Siena. Viaggio fatto al Santo Sepolcro*, Pisa 1991, pp. 13–131.

MARIN SANUDO, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis* [1321], ed. Jacques Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos sive orientalium expeditionum et regni Francorum hierosolimitani historia*, Hannover 1611, vol. II.

MAXIMOS OF SIMI, *Αἱ ἀπὸ τῆς ἔκτης οἰκουμένης συνόδου Πατριάρχαι τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἄχρις ἔτους 1810^{ου}* [ca. 1810], ed. Papadopoulos-Keramevs 1891–1898, vol. III, pp. 1–85.

MEMORIA DE ILLIS MONASTERIIS QUAE SUNT IN EXTREMIS HIERUSALEM IN TERRA PROMISIONIS, ed. McCormick 2011, pp. 208–215.

MOUSKET, PHILIPPE, *Chronique* [1242], exc. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. III, pp. 485–501.

NASSIR-I KHUSRAW, *Sefer Namah*, ed. and transl. Charles Schefer, *Sefer Nameh. Relation du voyage de Nassiri Khosrau en Syrie, en Palestine, en Égypte, en Arabie et en Perse*, Paris 1881.

NEOPHYTOS OF CYPRUS, *Υπόμνημα περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ διαφόρων χριστιανικῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ λογομαχιῶν αὐτῶν περὶ τῶν παναγίων προσκυνημάτων* [ca. 1840], ed. Papadopoulos-Keramevs 1891–1898, vol. II, pp. 405–463.

NICCOLÒ DA POGGIBONSI, *Libro d’Oltremare* [1346], ed. Lanza/Troncarelli 1990.

NICOLA DE’ MARTONI, *Liber peregrinationis* [1394–1395], ed. Michele Piccirillo, *Io Notaio Nicola de Martoni. Il pellegrinaggio ai Luoghi Santi da Carinola a Gerusalemme 1394–1395*, (Paris – Bibliothèque Nationale N. 6521 du Fonds Latin), Jerusalem 2003.

OGIER D’ANGLURE [1394], ed. François Bonnardot, Auguste Longnon, *Le Saint Voyage de Jérusalem du Seigneur D’Anglure*, Paris 1878.

ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, ed. Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1953.

ORIGEN, *Contra Celsum*, ed. Michael Fiedrowicz, Claudia Barthold, Freiburg im Breisgau 2011–2012.

PERDIKAS OF EPHEBUS [ca. 1300], ed. Theoni Baseu-Barabas, “Perdikas von Ephesus und seine Beschreibung Jerusalems: die Heiligen Stätten gesehen von einem Byzantiner des 14. Jhs.”, *Σύμμεικτα*, XI (1997), pp. 151–188.

PETER THE DEACON, *De locis sanctis*, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. II, pp. 171–206.

PFINTZING, GEORG [1435], ed. Röhrich/Meisner 1880, pp. 65–96.

PHILIP OF SAVONA, *Liber peregrinationis* [ca. 1280–1289], ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. IV, pp. 221–254.

PIACENZA ANONYMOUS, *Itinerarium*, ed. Paul Geyer, in Geyer [et al.] 1965, pp. 129–153.

PREFÁT, OLDŘICH [1546], ed. Karel Hrdina, *Cesta z Prahy do Benátek a odtud potom po moři až do Palestyny, to jest do krajiny někdy Židovské, země Svaté, do města Jeruzaléma k Božímu hrobu, kteraužto cestu s pomocí Pána Boha všemohúcího šťastně vykonal Voldřich Prefát z Vlkanova léta Páně MDXXXVI*, Prague 1947.

PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, ed. Henry B. Dewing, Glanville Downey, *Procopius. Buildings*, Cambridge, MA 1971.

PROTOEVANGELIUM OF JAMES, ed. Émile Amann, *Le Protévangile de Jacques et ses remaniements latins*, Paris 1910.

PSEUDO-EUCHERIUS, *De situ Hierosolymae*, ed. Johannes Fraipont, in Geyer [et al.] 1965, pp. 237–243.

PSEUDO-HEGESIPPUS, *Tractatus de distanciis locorum Terrae Sanctae*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. CXXXIII, cols 991–1004.

QUALITER SITA EST CIVITAS IERUSALEM, ed. De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. I, pp. 1–5.

RALPH OF COGGESHALL, *De expugnatione Terrae Sanctae* [1207–1226], ed. Joseph Stevenson, *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, (Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi scriptores 66), London 1875, pp. 209–262.

RAYMOND OF AGUILERS, *Historia Francorum*, ed. Recueil HO 1844–1895, vol. III, pp. 231–310.

ANTONIO DE’ REBOLDI [1326, 1330], ed. Reinhold Röhrich, “Antonius de Cremona, de’ Rebaldi da Cremona, *Itinerarium ad sepulchrum Domini*”, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, XIII (1890), pp. 153–174.

RHENISH ANONYMOUS [ca. 1350–1360], ed. Ludwig Conrady, *Vier rheinische Palaestina-Pilgerschriften des XIV., XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 1882, pp. 20–48.

RICHARD THE CANON, *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta Regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs, (Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi scriptores 38), London 1864.

RICOLDO DA MONTECROCE, *Liber peregrinationis* [ca. 1280–1289], in De Sandoli 1978–1984, vol. IV, pp. 255–332.

RORGO FRETELLUS DE NAZARETH, *Descriptio cuiusdam de locis sanctis* [ca. 1154], ed. Petrus C. Boeren, *Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth et sa description de la Terre Sainte. Histoire et édition du texte*, Amsterdam/Oxford/New York 1980, pp. 6–46.

SAEWULF [I 102–I 103], ed. Huygens 1994, pp. 58–77.

SCHILDTBERGER, JOHANN [1394–1427], ed. Valentin Langmantel, *Hans Schiltbergers Reisebuch nach der Nürnberger Handschrift*, Tübingen 1885.

SIMEON OF POLAND [1615–1620], transl. George A. Bournoutian, *The Travel Accounts of Simēon of Poland (Simēon dpri Lehats'woy Ughegrut'iwn)*, Costa Mesa 2007.

SOPHRONIUS, *Anacreontics*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. LXXXVII cols 3725–3840.

SUMMA STACIONUM ET DEDICACIONUM [ca. 1250–1291], ed. Saletti 2012, pp. 286–289.

SURIANO, FRANCESCO [ca. 1500], ed. Girolamo Golubovich, *Il trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente di frate Francesco Suriano missionario e viaggiatore del secolo XV*, Milan 1900.

SYMEON OF THESSALONIKE, *On the Holy Church*, ed. Migne 1856–1866, vol. CLV, cols 305–361.

THEODERIC, *De locis sanctis*, ed. Huygens 1994, pp. 142–197.

THIETMAR, *Iter ad Terram Sanctam* [1217], ed. Titus Tobler, *Magistri Thetmari Iter ad Terram Sanctam anno 1217*, St. Gallen/Bern 1851.

TZEWEERS, WILHELM, *Itinerarius Terrae Sancte* [1477–1488], ed. Gritje Hartmann, Wiesbaden 2004.

VERNIERO, PIETRO, *Croniche* [ca. 1637], ed. Girolamo Golubovich, *Croniche o annali di Terra Santa del P. Pietro Verniero di Montepeloso de' Frati Minori*, Quaracchi 1930–1936 [=Golubovich 1906–1927, vols VI–X].

WILLIAM OF TYRE, *Chronicle*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, *Guillaume de Tyr. Chronique*, (Corpus christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 63), Turnhout 1986.

WILLIAM WEY, *Itinerary to the Holy Land* [1458], ed. George Williams, *The Itineraries of William Wey Fellow of Eton College to Jerusalem, 1458*, London 1857.

YAHYA IBN SA'ID, *Chronicle*, ed. and transl. Ignace Kratchkovsky, Alexander Vasiliev, *Histoire de Yahya ibn Sa'id d'Antioche*, (Patrologia Orientalis XLVIII/4), Turnhout 1997.

ZVAR JIYERJI, *Pazmavep* [1721], ed. Kevork Hintlian, “Mapping a Pilgrimage: The Accounts of an Armenian's Travels to the Holy Land”, *Jerusalem Quarterly File* (Autumn 2001), pp. 37–48.

COLLECTIONS OF SOURCES AND ANTHOLOGIES OF EXCERPTS

BALDI 1955 – Donato Baldi, *Enchiridion locorum sanctorum*, Jerusalem 1955.

DE CASTRO 1957 – Manuel de Castro, “Dos itinerarios de Tierra Santa de los siglos XIV y XV”, *Hispania Sacra*, X (1957), pp. 451–470.

DE SANDOLI 1978–1984 – *Itinera hierosolymitana Crucesignatorum*, Sabino De Sandoli ed., Jerusalem 1978–1984.

DELISLE 1840–1904 – *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, Leopold Delisle ed., Paris 1840–1904.

FEYERABEND 1584 – *Reyßbuch des heyiligen Lands*, Sigmund Feyerabend ed., Frankfurt am Main 1584.

GEYER ET ALII 1965 – *Itineraria et alia geographica*, Paul Geyer, Otto Cuntz, Ezio Franceschini, Robert Weber, Ludwig Bieler, Johannes Fraipont, Fredericus Glorie eds, (Corpus christianorum. Series latina 175), Turnhout 1965.

GOLUBOVICH 1906–1927 – Girolamo Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, Quaracchi 1906–1927.

HERZ/HUSCHENBETT/SCZESNY 1998 – *Fünf Palästina-Pilgerberichte aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, Randall Herz, Dietrich Huschenbett, Frank Sczesny eds, Wiesbaden 1998.

HUYGENS 1994 – *Peregrinationes tres: Saewulf, Iohannes Wirziburgensis, Theodoricus*, Robert B. C. Huygens ed., (Corpus christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis 139), Turnhout 1994.

KADAS 1986 – *Προσκυνητάρια των Αγίων Τόπων. Δέκα ελληνικά χειρόγραφα 16^{ου}–18^{ου} αι.*, Sotirios N. Kadas ed., Thessaloniki 1986.

KHITROWO 1889 – B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, Geneva 1889.

KOIKILIDES/FOKYDIDES 1912 – K. Koikilides, I. Fokydides, *Ἀρχαῖα λατινικά, ἑλληνικά, ῥώσικα καὶ γαλλικά τινὰ Ὀδοιπορικά ἢ προσκυνητάρια τῆς Ἁγίας Γῆς*, Jerusalem 1912.

LANZA/TRONCARELLI 1990 – *Pellegrini scrittori. Viaggiatori toscani del Trecento in Terrasanta*, Antonio Lanza, Marcellina Troncarelli eds, Florence 1990.

LE STRANGE 1890 – Guy Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems. A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500*, London 1890.

MIGNE 1844–1866 – *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, Jacques-Paul Migne ed., Paris 1844–1866.

MIGNE 1856–1866 – *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca*, Jacques-Paul Migne ed., Paris 1856–1866.

PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEVS 1891–1898 – *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας*, Athanasios Papadopoulos-Keramevs ed., Saint Petersburg 1891–1898.

PERTZ/RODENBERG 1883 – *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis Pontificum Romanorum selectae*, Georg H. Pertz, Karl Rodenberg eds, (Monumenta Germaniae historica. Epistolae saeculi XIII/1), Berlin 1883.

PRINGLE 2012 – Denys Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291*, Farnham 2012.

RECUEIL HO 1844–1895 – *Recueil des historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux*, Paris 1844–1895.

RÖHRICHT/MEISNER 1880 – *Deutsche Pilgerreisen nach dem heiligen Lande*, Reinhold Röhrich, Heinrich Meisner eds, Berlin 1880.

SCHMID 1957 – *Luzerner und Innerschweizer Pilgerreisen zum Heiligen Grab in Jerusalem vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Josef Schmid ed., Luzern 1957.

SCHWARTZ 1939 – Eduard Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig 1939.

TISCHENDORF 1876 – *Evangelia apocrypha adhibitis codicibus graecis et latinis maximam partem nunc primum consultis atque ineditorum copia insignibus*, Konstantin von Tischendorf ed., Leipzig 1876.

TOBLER 1874 – *Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae ex saeculo VIII, IX, XII et XV*, Titus Tobler ed., Leipzig 1874.

TOBLER/MOLINIER 1877–1885 – *Itinera hierosolymitana et descriptiones Terrae sanctae bellis sacris anteriora et Latina lingua exarata*, Titus Tobler, Auguste Molinier eds, Geneva 1877–1885.

WILKINSON 1977 – John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster 1977.

WILKINSON 1988 – John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage, 1099–1185*, London 1988.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABEL 1918** – Félix-Marie Abel, “Chronique”, *Revue biblique*, xv (1918), pp. 550–558.
- ACETO 2015** – Francesco Aceto, “Betlemme a Roma. Spigolature in margine al culto di san Girolamo e al Presepe di Arnolfo di Cambio”, in *Medioevo. Natura e figura*, Arturo Carlo Quintavalle ed., Milan 2015, pp. 547–556.
- AŁAWNOWNI 1931** – Meguerditch Aławnowni, *Haykakan hin vank’er [Old Armenian Monasteries]*, Jerusalem 1931.
- ALCHERMES 2005** – Joseph D. Alchermes, “Art and Architecture in the Age of Justinian”, in Maas 2005, pp. 343–375.
- ALESSANDRI 2012** – *The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem: An Interdisciplinary Approach to a Knowledge-Based Restoration*, Claudio Alessandri ed., Amsterdam 2012 (special issue of *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, xiii [2012]).
- AMICO 1609** – Bernardino Amico, *Trattato delle piante et imagini de i sacri edificii di Terrasanta*, Rome 1609.
- AMIRAN/ARIEH/TURCOTTE 1994** – David H. K. Amiran, E. Ariei, T. Turcotte, “Earthquakes in Israel and Adjacent Areas: Macroseismic Observations since 100 B.C.”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XLIV (1994), pp. 260–305.
- ANDALORO 1986** – Maria Andaloro, “Tecniche e materiali”, in *I mosaici di Monreale: restauri e scoperte (1865–1982)*, Palermo 1986, pp. 55–70.
- ANDALORO 1995** – Maria Andaloro, “I mosaici del Sancta Sanctorum”, in *Sancta Sanctorum*, Milan 1995, pp. 126–191.
- ANDALORO 2000** – Maria Andaloro, “Dal ritratto all’icona”, in *Arte e iconografia a Roma da Costantino a Cola di Rienzo*, Maria Andaloro, Serena Romano eds, Milan 2000, pp. 31–67.
- ANDALORO 2002** – Maria Andaloro, “Dalla Terrasanta alla Sicilia”, in Calò Mariani 2002, pp. 463–474.
- ANGELOVA 2015** – Diliana N. Angelova, *Sacred Founders. Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome through Early Byzantium*, Oakland, CA 2015.
- ANTREASSIAN 1977** – Assadour Antreassian, *Jerusalem of the Armenians*, Jerusalem 1977.
- ARNOLD 2013** – John Charles Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel. The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c. 300 – c. 800*, New York 2013.
- ASSMAN 1992** – Jan Assman, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich 1992.
- ASSMAN 1999** – Aleida Assman, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich 1999.
- ATALLA 1989** – Nabil Selim Atalla, *Coptic Art*, Cairo 1989.
- AULD/HILLENBRAND 2009** – Ayyubid Jerusalem: *The Holy City in Context 1187–1250*, Sylvia Auld, Robert Hillenbrand eds, London 2009.
- AVIGAD 1980** – Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, Jerusalem 1980.
- AVI-YONAH 1954** – Michel Avi-Yonah, *The Madaba Map Mosaic: With Introduction and Commentary*, Jerusalem 1954.
- AVNER 2011** – Rina Avner, “The Initial Tradition of the Theotokos at the Kathisma: Earliest Celebrations and the Calendar”, in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, Leslie Brubaker, Mary B. Cunningham eds, Farnham 2011, pp. 9–30.
- AVNER 2015** – Rina Avner, “*Presbeia Theotokou*, *presbeia metros*: Reconsidering the Origins of the Feast and the Cult of the Theotokos at the Kathisma, on the Road to Bethlehem”, in *Presbeia Theotokou. The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium*, Leena Mari Peltomaa, Andreas Külzer, Pauline Allen eds, Vienna 2015, pp. 41–48.
- AVNI 2014** – Gideon Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine. An Archaeological Approach*, Cambridge 2014.
- BACCI 2003** – Michele Bacci, “Le rôle des images dans les polémiques religieuses entre l’Église grecque et l’Église latine (XIe–XIIIe siècles)”, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, LXXXI (2003), pp. 1023–1049.
- BACCI 2006** – Michele Bacci, “Epigoni orientali e occidentali dell’immagine di Cristo ‘non fatta da mano d’uomo’”, in *L’immagine di Cristo dall’Acheropita alla mano d’artista. Dal tardo medioevo all’età barocca*, Christoph L. Frommel, Gerhard Wolf eds, Vatican City 2006, pp. 43–60.
- BACCI 2007** – *L’artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, Michele Bacci ed., Pisa 2007.
- BACCI 2009** – Michele Bacci, “Immagini sacre e ‘pietà topografica’ presso i Minori”, in *Le immagini del Francescanesimo*, Spoleto 2009, pp. 31–57.
- BACCI 2012** – Michele Bacci, “Images ‘votives’ et portraits de donateurs au Levant au Moyen Âge tardif”, in *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin*, Jean-Michel Spieser, Élisabeth Yota eds, Paris 2012, pp. 293–308.
- BACCI 2013** – Michele Bacci, “Remarks on the Visual Experience of Holy Sites in the Middle Ages”, in *Mobile Eyes. Peripatetisches Sehen in den Bildkulturen der Vormoderne*, David Ganz, Stefan Neuner eds, Munich 2013, pp. 174–197.
- BACCI 2014a** – Michele Bacci, “Locative Memory and the Pilgrim’s Experience of Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages”, in Kühnel/Noga-Banai/Vorholt 2014, pp. 67–75.
- BACCI 2014b** – Michele Bacci, “Santidad localizada: Percepciones de los *laca sancta* de Palestina en la Edad Media”, *Codex Aquilarensis*, xxx (2014), pp. 109–132.
- BACCI 2015** – Michele Bacci, “Old Restorations and New Discoveries in the Nativity Church, Bethlehem”, *Convivium* II/2 (2015), pp. 36–59.
- BACCI 2016a** – Michele Bacci, “Echoes of Golgotha. On the Iconization of Monumental Crosses in Medieval Svanet’i”, in *The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, Ivan Foletti, Eric Thunø eds, *Convivium*, Supplementum (2016), pp. 206–225.
- BACCI 2016b** – Michele Bacci, “Shaping the Holy Topography of Saint Catherine in the Late Middle Ages”, in *At Home in Art: Essays in Honour of Mario Buhagiar*, Charlene Vella ed., Valletta 2016, pp. 325–338.
- BACCI 2016c** – Michele Bacci, “Le statut des peintures murales dans l’Occident médiéval: quelques réflexions”, *Les cahiers de Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa*, XL (2016), pp. 223–235.
- BACCI FORTHCOMING** – Michele Bacci, “Water in the Making of Holy Places: The Well of the Star, the Bath Grotto, and Other Cisterns of Bethlehem”, in *The Life-Giving Source. Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*, Alexej M. Lidov ed., forthcoming (2017).
- BACCI/BIANCHI/CAMPANA/FICHERA 2012** – Michele Bacci, Giovanna Bianchi, Stefano Campana, Raffaele Fichera, “Historical and Archaeological Analysis of the Church of the Nativity”, *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, xiii (2012), pp. 5–26.
- BACHRACH 1993** – Bernard S. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra, the Neo-Roman Consul, 987–1040. A Political Biography of the Angevin Count*, Berkeley 1993.
- BAGATTI 1939** – Bellarmino Bagatti, *Il Museo della Flagellazione in Gerusalemme*, Jerusalem 1939.
- BAGATTI 1949** – Bellarmino Bagatti, “Eulogie palestinesi”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, xv (1949), pp. 126–166.
- BAGATTI 1952** – Bellarmino Bagatti, *Gli antichi edifici sacri di Betlemme in seguito agli scavi e restauri praticati dalla Custodia di Terra Santa (1948–1951)*, Jerusalem 1952.
- BAGATTI 1968** – Bellarmino Bagatti, “Recenti scavi a Betlemme”, *Liber Annuus*, xviii (1968), pp. 181–237.

BAGATTI 1971A – Bellarmino Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, Jerusalem 1971.

BAGATTI 1971B – Bellarmino Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision. History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians*, Jerusalem 1971.

BAGATTI 1983 – Bellarmino Bagatti, *Antichi villaggi cristiani di Giudea e Neghev*, Jerusalem 1983.

BAGATTI/ALLIATA 1980 – Bellarmino Bagatti, Eugenio Alliata, “Scavo ai ‘Pozzi di David’ a Betlemme”, *Liber Annuus*, XXX (1980), pp. 259–262.

BALDI 1919 – Pasquale Baldi, *La questione dei luoghi santi in generale*, Turin 1919.

BALDI 1954 – Pasquale Baldi, *La question des Lieux Saints*, Jerusalem 1954.

BALDINI 2009 – Isabella Baldini, “La basilica di S. Tito a Gortina e gli appunti inediti di Giuseppe Gerola”, *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene*, LXXXVII (2009), pp. 635–679.

BALDOVIN 1987 – John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, Rome 1987.

BALTY 1995 – Janine Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient*, Paris 1995.

BASHEAR 1991 – Suliman Bashear, “Qibla Musharriqa and Early Muslim Prayer in Churches”, *The Muslim World*, LXXVI/3–4 (1991), pp. 267–282 [republished in Idem, *Studies in Early Islamic Tradition*, Jerusalem 2004].

BAUMSTARK 1906 – Anton Baumstark, “Palästinensia. Ein vorläufiger Bericht”, *Römische Quartalschrift*, XX (1906), pp. 123–149, 157–188.

BAUMSTARK 1934 – Anton Baumstark, “Die Grabungen in der Geburtskirche zu Bethlehem”, *Oriens Christianus*, III/9 (1934), pp. 268–271.

BEAULIEU/FRIEDMAN 2016 – Marie-Armelle Beaulieu, Greg Friedman, “Restoring the Edicule”, *The Holy Land Review*, n.s., IX/3 (2016), pp. 6–8.

BEAUVEAU 1619 – Henry de Beauveau, *Relation journalière du voyage du Levant*, Nancy 1619.

BENOIT 1975 – Pierre Benoit, “L’emplacement de Bethléem au temps de Jésus”, *Les dossiers de l’archéologie*, X (1975), pp. 58–63.

BERCHEM 1927 – Max Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Part 2: Syrie du Sud. Tome 2: Jérusalem, Haram*, Paris 1927.

BERGER 2012 – Pamela Berger, *The Crescent on the Temple. The Dome of the Rock as Image of the Ancient Jewish Sanctuary*, Leiden/Boston 2012.

BERLINER 1955 – Rudolf Berliner, *Die Weihnachtsskrippe*, Munich 1955.

BERMAN/GUTMAN 1970 – Shmarya Gutman, Ariel Berman, “Chronique archéologique. Bethléem”, *Revue biblique*, LXXVII (1970), pp. 583–585.

BERNABEI/BONTADI 2012 – Mauro Bernabei, Jarno Bontadi, “Dendrochronological analysis of the timber structure of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem”, *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, XIII (2012), pp. 54–60.

BERTELSEN 2013 – Cynthia D. Bertelsen, *Mushroom. A Global History*, London 2013.

BEUCKERS 2000 – Klaus Gereon Beuckers, “Marginalien zur Herleitung des Trikonchos von St. Maria im Kapitol aus der Bethlehemmer Geburtskirche”, *Colonia Romanica*, XV (2000), pp. 109–114.

BIANUCCI 2005 – Rita Bianucci, *David Roberts. Egypt and Holy Land*, Florence 2005.

BIDDLE 1994 – Martin Biddle, “The Tomb of Christ: Sources, Methods and a New Approach”, in “Churches Built in Ancient Times”: *Recent Studies in Early Christian Archaeology*, Kenneth Painter ed., London 1994, pp. 73–147.

BINOS 1787 – Dominique de Binos, *Voyage par l’Italie en Egypte et au Mont Liban et en Palestine ou Terre Sainte*, Paris 1787.

BIRKHAN 2012 – Helmut Birkhan, *Pflanzen im Mittelalter. Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Vienna 2012.

BIRTHPLACE OF JESUS 2011 – Birthplace of Jesus. *Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route*. World Heritage Site Nomination Document,

[Ramallah] 2011 [http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1433.pdf].

BISCONTI 2001–2002 – Fabio Bisconti, “Vetri dorati e arte monumentale”, *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di archeologia*, LXXIV (2001–2002), pp. 177–193.

BITTON-ASHKELONY 2005 – Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred. The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 2005.

BLAIR 1998 – Sheila Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions*, Edinburgh 1998.

BORG 1969 – Alan Borg, “Observations on the Historiated Lintel of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXII (1969), pp. 25–40.

BORG 1981 – Alan Borg, “The Lost Apse Mosaic of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem”, in *The Vanishing Past. Studies of Medieval Art, Liturgy, and Metrology presented to Christopher Hohler*, Alan Borg, Andrew Martindale eds, Oxford 1981, pp. 5–15.

BORG 1982 – Alan Borg, “Romanesque Sculpture from the Rhone Valley to the Jordan Valley”, in Folda 1982, pp. 97–119.

BOULLATA 2009 – Kamal Boullata, *Birth of a Pictorial Language 1850–1948. Palestinian Art from 1850 to the Present*, London/San Francisco/Beirut 2009.

BRANDT 1986 – Hans Jürgen Brandt, “Die Jerusalemkirche des Bischofs Meinwerk von 1036: zur Bedeutung des Heilig-Grab-Kultes im Mittelalter”, in *Die Busdorfkirche in Paderborn, 1036–1086*, Paderborn 1986, pp. 173–195.

BREMOND 1669 – Gabriel Bremond, *Viaggi fatti nell’Egitto superiore et inferiore, nel Monte Sinai, e luoghi più cospicui di quella regione*, Rome 1669.

BRENK 1977 – Beat Brenk, *Spätantike und frühes Christentum*, (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte. Supplementband I), Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Vienna 1977.

BRENK 2005 – Beat Brenk, *Architettura e immagini del sacro nella tarda Antichità*, Spoleto 2005.

BRENK 2010 – Beat Brenk, “L’importanza e la funzione della Cappella Palatina di Palermo nella storia dell’arte”, in *La Cappella Palatina di Palermo*, Beat Brenk ed., Modena 2010, pp. 27–78.

BRENK 2013 – Beat Brenk, “I volti delle botteghe bizantine. Nuove osservazioni e conclusioni sulle tecniche dei mosaicisti nella Cappella Palatina di Palermo”, *Arte medievale*, IV/3 (2013), pp. 237–256.

BREYDY 1983 – Michel Breydy, *Études sur Sa’id ibn Baṭṭīq et ses sources*, Louvain 1983.

BRINCKEN 1973 – Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Die “Nationes christianorum Orientalium” im Verständnis der lateinischen Historiographie von der Mitte des 12. bis in die zweite Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Cologne/Vienna 1973.

BUCHTHAL 1957 – Hugo Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford 1957.

BUCKINGHAM 1821 – James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead*, London 1821.

BURTON 1838 – Nathanael Burton, *Narrative of a Voyage from Liverpool to Alexandria, Touching at the Island of Malta, and from Thence to Beirut in Syria, With a Journey to Jerusalem, Voyage from Jaffa to Cyprus and Constantinople, and a Pedestrian Journey from Constantinople, Through Turkey, Wallachia, Hungary, and Prussia, to the Town of Hamburg, in the Years 1836–1837*, Dublin 1838.

BURY 1923 – John Bagnell Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)*, London 1923.

BUSCHHAUSEN 1978 – Helmut Buschhausen, *Die süditalienische Bauplastik im Königreich Jerusalem*, Vienna 1978.

BUSCHHAUSEN 1982 – Helmut Buschhausen, “Die Fassade der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem”, in Folda 1982, pp. 71–96.

BUSSE 1966 – Heribert Busse, “Der Islam und die biblischen Kultstätten”, *Der Islam*, LXII (1966), pp. 113–143.

BUSSE 1987 – Heribert Busse, “Tempel, Grabeskirche und Haram aš-Šarif. Drei Heiligtümer und ihre gegenseitigen Beziehungen in Legende und Wirklichkeit”, in *Jerusalem Heiligtums Traditionen in altkirchlicher und frühislamischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 1–28.

BUSSE 1993 – Heribert Busse, “Die ‘Umar-Moschee im östlichen Atrium der Grabeskirche”, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästinavereins*, CIX (1993), pp. 73–82.

BYNUM 2011 – Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, New York 2011.

CAIN 2013 – Andrew Cain, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, Oxford 2013.

CALÒ MARIANI 2002 – *Il cammino di Gerusalemme*, Maria Stella Calò Mariani ed., Bari 2002.

CAMPOPIANO 2014 – Michele Campopiano, “Note sulla presenza francescana in Terrasanta: le descrizioni dei luoghi santi tra XIV e XVI secolo e il ruolo della Custodia di Terrasanta”, in *Gli Italiani e la Terrasanta*, Antonio Musarra ed., Florence 2014, pp. 49–69.

CANETTI 2012 – Luigi Canetti, *Impronte di Gloria. Effigie e ornamento nell'Europa cristiana*, Rome 2012.

CASTELLANI 1922 – Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani ed altri documenti legali emanati in lingua araba e turca concernenti i santuari, le proprietà, i diritti della Custodia di Terra Santa conservati nell'archivio della stessa Custodia in Gerusalemme*, Jerusalem 1922.

CASTIÑEIRAS 2014 – Manuel Castiñeiras, “Vox Domini: el órgano medieval del Museo del Studium Biblicum Franciscanum de Jerusalén y la perdida Sibila de la iglesia de la Natividad de Belén”, *Ad limina*, IV (2014), pp. 63–82.

CASTIÑEIRAS 2015 – Manuel Castiñeiras, “El trasfondo mítico de la Sibila y sus metamorfosis (siglos IV–XIII): Santa María la Mayor, Sant'Angelo in Formis, Belén y Santiago de Compostela”, in *La Sibila. Sonido, imagen, liturgia, escena*, María del Carmen Gómez Muntané, Eduardo Carrero Santamaría eds, Madrid 2015, pp. 169–206.

CAZELLES 1989 – Henri Cazelles, “Sur l'histoire de Bethléem”, in *Κεχαριτωμένη. Mélanges René Laurentin*, Paris 1989, pp. 145–152.

CERULLI 1943 – Enrico Cerulli, *Etiopi in Palestina. Storia della comunità etiopica di Gerusalemme*, Rome 1943.

CHARLES-ROUX 1930 – François Charles-Roux, *France et Chrétiens d'Orient*, Paris 1930.

CHATEAUBRIAND 1839 – René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, Paris 1839.

CHATZIDAKI 1994 – Nano Chatzidaki, *Βυζαντινά Ψηφιδωτά*, Athens 1994.

CHATZIDAKIS/DRAKOPOULOU 1987–2010 – Manolis Chatzidakis, Eugenia Drakopoulou, *Ἑλληνες ζωγράφοι μετά την Ἀλωση (1450–1830)*, Athens 1987–2010.

CHEN 1979 – Doron Chen, “The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem: The Design of Justinian's Plan”, *Liber Annuus*, XXIX (1979), pp. 270–275.

CHÉNEAU 1923 – Paul Chéneau, “Chronique. Le carillon de Bethléem”, *Revue biblique*, XXXII (1923), pp. 602–607.

CHRISTOFORAKI 2000 – Ioanna Christoforaki, “An Unusual Representation of the Incredulity from Lusignan Cyprus”, *Cahiers archéologiques*, XLVIII (2000), pp. 71–87.

CHRUPCAŁA 2009 – Lesław Daniel Chrupcała, *Betlemme culla del Messia*, Milan 2009.

CIAMPINI 1693 – Giovanni Giustino Ciampini, *De sacris aedificiis a Constantino Magno constructis. Synopsis historica*, Rome 1693.

CLARKE 1814 – Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, New York 1814.

CLAVERIE 1999 – Pierre-Vincent Claverie, “Un conflit entre deux évêques italiens de Terre Sainte: l'affaire ‘Giovanni Romano’ (1245–1248)”, *Studi medievali*, III/40 (1999), pp. 291–304.

CODINA 2005 – Daniel Codina, “La Chapelle de la Trinité de Saint-Michel de Cuixà. Conception théologique et symbolique”, *Les cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, XXXVI (2005), pp. 81–88.

COHEN 2011 – Raymond Cohen, “Conflict and Neglect: Between Ruin and Preservation at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem”, in *Towards World Heritage. International Origins of the Preservation Movement 1870–1930*, Melanie Hall ed., London 2011, pp. 91–108.

COLLIN 1948 – Bernardin Collin, *Les lieux saints*, Paris 1948.

COLLIN 1956 – Bernardin Collin, *Le problème juridique des Lieux Saints*, Cairo 1956.

COMPRI/BOLOGNESI/ORLANDI 2016 – Emanuela Compri, Elena Bolognesi, Roberto Orlandi, *Betlemme e i suoi santuari*, Milan 2016.

CONCINA/FLORES DAVID/GUIDETTI 2011 – Elisabetta Concina, Anna Flores David, Mattia Guidetti, *Luce dell'invisibile. Itinerari del mosaico intorno al Mediterraneo medievale*, Venice 2011.

CORBO 1955 – Virginio Corbo, *Gli scavi di Kh. Siyar el-Ghanam (Campo dei Pastori) e i monasteri dei dintorni*, Jerusalem 1955.

CORBO 1982 – Virginio Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro: aspetti archeologici dalle origini al periodo crociato*, Jerusalem 1982.

CORBO 1987 – Virginio Corbo, “Dove era il ‘Poimnion’ o Campo dei Pastori?”, *Liber Annuus*, XXXVI (1987), pp. 311–332.

CORNILLE 1836 – Henri Cornille, *Souvenirs d'Orient*, Paris 1836.

COÛASNON 1974 – Charles Coûasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, London 1974.

CRESWELL 1932–1940 – Keppel A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Oxford 1932–1940.

CROWFOOT 1941 – John W. Crowfoot, *Early Churches in Palestine*, London 1941.

CROWN 1986 – Alan D. Crown, “The Samaritans in the Byzantine Orbit”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, LXIX (1986), pp. 96–138.

CRUIKSHANK DODD/KHAIRALLAH 1981 – Erica Cruikshank Dodd, Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word. A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, Beirut 1998.

ČURČIĆ 2006 – Slobodan Čurčić, “Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian Hierotopical Synthesis”, in Lidov 2006, pp. 216–236.

ČURČIĆ/HADJITRYPHONOS 2010 – *Architecture as Icon. Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art*, Slobodan Čurčić, Evangelia Hadjistryphonos eds, New Haven/London 2010.

CUST 1929 – Lionel G. A. Cust, *The Status Quo in the Holy Places*, London 1929.

CUTLER 1986–1987 – Anthony Cutler, “Ephraïm, Mosaicist of Bethlehem: The Evidence from Jerusalem”, *Jewish Art*, XII–XIII (1986–1987), pp. 179–183.

D'AVEYRO 1593 – Pantaleão d'Aveyro, *Itinerario da Terrasanta e suas particularidades*, Lisbon 1593.

D'ESTOUMEL 1844 – Joseph d'Estoumel, *Journal d'un voyage en Orient*, Paris 1844.

D'ONOFRIO 1973 – Mario D'Onofrio, *Le chiese di Dvin*, Rome 1973.

DALMAN 1939 – Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina. Band VI. Zeltleben, Vieh- und Milchwirtschaft, Jagd, Fischfang, Gütersloh* 1939.

DALTON 1922 – Ormonde Maddock Dalton, “On Two Medieval Bronze Bowls in the British Museum”, *Archaeologia*, LXXII (1922), pp. 133–160.

DAUPHIN 1997 – Claudine Dauphin, “Carpet of Stone: The Graeco-Roman Legacy in the Levant”, *Classics Ireland*, IV (1997), pp. 1–32.

DE BLAUW 1994 – Sible De Blauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, 2 vols, Vatican City 1994.

DE SANDOLI 1974 – Sabino De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum Terrae Sanctae (1099–1291)*. Testa, traduzione e annotazioni, Jerusalem 1974.

DE SANDOLI 1990 – Sabino De Sandoli, *La liberazione pacifica dei Luoghi Santi nel sec. XIV: ossia il terzo ritorno del clero franco o latino nella Custodia e servizio dei luoghi santi mediante ufficiali trattative (1333)*, Jerusalem 1990.

DE STEFANIS 1573 – Bonifacio de Stefanis, *Liber de perenni cultu Terrae Sanctae et de fructuosa eius peregrinatione*, Venice 1573.

DE VOGÜÉ 1860 – Melchior de Vogüé, *Les églises de la Terre Sainte*, Paris 1860.

DEGOUT 2013 – Bernard Degout, “La constitution du trésor latin du Saint-Sépulcre: un aperçu historique”, in Degout/Charles-Gaffiot 2013, pp. 20–33.

DEGOUT/CHARLES-GAFFIOT 2013 – *Trésor du Saint-Sépulcre*, exhibition catalogue (Versailles, 16 April–14 July 2013), Bernard Degout, Jacques Charles-Gaffiot eds, Milan/Paris 2013.

DELLA DORA 2016 – Veronica della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2016.

DEVOS 1968 – Paul Devos, “Égerie à Bethléem: le 40e jour après Pâques à Jérusalem en 383”, *Analecta Bollandiana*, LXXXVI (1968), pp. 87–108.

DI NAPOLI 2000 – Federica Di Napoli, “Betlemme”, entries nos 224–250, in Piccirillo 2000, pp. 252–254.

DIETL 2009 – Albert Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur. Die mittelalterlichen Künstlerinschriften Italiens*, Munich 2009.

DJURIĆ/Tsitouridou 1986 – Vojislav Djurić, Anna Tsitouridou, *Namentragende Inschriften auf Fresken und Mosaiken auf der Balkanhalbinsel vom 7. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1986.

DONDAINE 1958 – Antoine Dondaine, “Hugues Éthérien et le concile de Constantinople de 1166”, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, LXXVII (1958), pp. 473–483.

DONDERER 1989 – Michael Donderer, *Die Mosaizisten der Antike und ihre wirtschaftliche und soziale Stellung. Eine Quellenstudie*, Erlangen 1989.

DOSITHEOS 1715 – Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem, *Ἱστορία περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις πατριαρχευσάντων*, Bucarest 1715.

DOUMATO 2000 – Lamia Doumato, “Opening the Door to Paradise: Bishop Theodorus and Saint Thomas Imagery in Thirteenth Century Syria”, *al-Masaq*, XII (2000), pp. 141–171.

DOWNEY 1947 – Glanville Downey, “The Composition of Procopius, *De aedificiis*”, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, LXXVIII (1947), pp. 171–183.

DRAKE BOEHM/HOLCOMB 2016 – *Jerusalem 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven*, Barbara Drake Boehm, Melanie Holcomb eds, New York 2016.

DRESSAIRE 1932 – Léopold Dressaire, “Les peintures exécutées au XIIe siècle sur les colonnes de la basilique de Bethléem”, *Jerusalem*, XXVII (1932), pp. 365–369.

DU CANGE 1668 – Charles Du Fresne, Sieur du Cange, *Histoire de St. Louis IX du nom Roy de France, écrite par Jean Sire de Joinville, Sénéchal de Champagne, enrichies de nouvelles observations et dissertations historiques*, Paris 1668.

DU CANGE 1688 – Charles du Fresne, Sieur du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis*, Lyon 1688.

DURR 2016 – Alexandra Durr, *L'image toxicologique à Byzance. Fonctions et usages des miniatures des Alexipharmaka et des Thériaka des pseudo-Dioscoride dans les derniers siècles de l'Empire*, PhD thesis (University of Fribourg 2016), unpublished.

DUVAL 1994 – Noël Duval, “Le rappresentazioni architettoniche”, in Piccirillo/Alliata 1994, pp. 165–230.

DUVAL 1999 – Noël Duval, “Essai sur la signification des vignettes topographiques”, in Piccirillo/Alliata 1999, pp. 134–146.

DYGGVE 1941 – Ejnar Dyggve, *Gravkirchen i Jerusalem. Konstantinske Problemer i Ny Belysning*, Copenhagen 1941.

EASTMOND 2000 – Antony Eastmond, “Plaque of the Adoration of the Magi and the Miracle of Salome”, in Vassilaki 2000, pp. 266–267.

EL AMA 2014 – George El Ama, “‘Mother of Pearl’ Art and Industry in Bethlehem”, in Elter 2014, pp. 163–168.

ELAD 1995 – Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship*, Leiden 1995.

ELTER 2014 – *Patrimoine en Palestine. Enjeux et obstacles de sa mise en valeur*, René Elter ed., Paris 2014.

ENLART 1925–1928 – Camille Enlart, *Les monuments des Croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem. Architecture religieuse et civile*, Paris 1925–1928.

ESCOBAR CABEZA DE VACA 1594 – Pedro Escobar Cabeza de Vaca, *Luzero de la Tierra Santa, y grandezas de Egypto y Monte Sinay*, Valladolid 1594.

EUW 1997 – Anton von Euw, “Das Lemberger Evangeliar als Kunstwerk”, in *Das Lemberger Evangeliar. Eine wiederentdeckte armenische Bilderhandschrift des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Günter Prinzing, Andrea Schmidt eds, Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 39–92.

FACCHINI 1986 – Augusto Facchini, *Le processioni praticate dai Frati Minori nei santuari di Terra Santa*, Cairo 1986.

FARIOLI CAMPANATI 1999 – Raffaella Farioli Campanati, “Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the Iconography of Church Sanctuary Mosaics”, in Piccirillo/Alliata 1999, pp. 173–177.

FARNAD 1519 – Nicholas of Farnad, *Compendiosa quedam nec minus lectu iocunda descriptio urbis Hierusalem atque diligens omnium locorum Terre Sancte in Hierosolymis adnotatio*, Vienna s.a. [ca. 1519].

FEISSEL 2000 – Denis Feissel, “Les édifices de Justinien au témoignage de Procope et des inscriptions”, *Antiquité tardive*, VIII (2000), pp. 81–104.

FLOOD 1997 – Finnegan Barry Flood, “Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals: Qalawunid Architecture and the Great Mosque of Damascus”, *Muqarnas*, XIV (1997), pp. 57–79.

FOLDA 1977 – Jaroslav Folda, “Painting and Sculpture in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem 1099–1291”, in Hazard 1977, pp. 251–280.

FOLDA 1982 – *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, Jaroslav Folda ed., Jerusalem 1982.

FOLDA 1995 – Jaroslav Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land 1098–1187*, Cambridge 1995.

FOLDA 2008 – Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art: The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1099–1291*, Aldershot 2008.

FOLDA 2015 – Jaroslav Folda, “Twelfth-Century Pilgrimage Art in Bethlehem and Jerusalem: Points of Contact Between Europe and the Crusader Kingdom”, in *Romanesque and the Mediterranean: Points of Contact Across the Latin, Greek and Islamic Worlds c. 1000 to c. 1250*, Rosa Maria Bacile, John McNeill eds, Leeds 2015, pp. 1–14.

FOWDEN 2002 – Elizabeth Key Fowden, “Sharing Holy Places”, *Common Knowledge*, VIII (2002), pp. 124–146.

FOWDEN 2015 – Elizabeth Key Fowden, “Rural Converters Among the Arabs”, in *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond*, Arietta Papaconstantinou, Neil McLynn, Daniel L. Schwartz eds, Abingdon/New York 2015, pp. 175–196.

FRASER 1979 – Albert Fraser, “The Classical Realm. Architecture”, in *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*. Catalogue of the Exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977, through February 12, 1978, Kurt Weitzmann ed., New York 1979, pp. 263–268.

GAND 1998 – Michel Gand, “Les origines de l'abbaye de Ferrières (Loiret)”, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique et historique de l'Orléanais*, n.s., xvi/119 (1998), pp. 12–15.

GANZ-BLÄTTER 1990 – Ursula Ganz-Blätter, *Andacht und Abenteuer. Berichte europäischer Jerusalem- und Santiagopilger*, Tübingen 1990.

GARITTE 1958 – Gérard Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34* (X^e siècle), Brussels 1958.

GEDEVANISHVILI 2007 – Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, “Some Thoughts on the Depiction of the Ecumenical Councils at Gelati”, *Iconographica*, vi (2007), pp. 54–60.

GERMER-DURAND 1891 – R. P. Germer-Durand, “Décoration de la basilique de Bethléem”, *Échos de Notre-Dame de France* (1891), pp. 41–45.

GERSTEL 1994 – Sharon Gerstel, “Liturgical Scrolls in the Byzantine Sanctuary”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, xxxv/2 (1994), pp. 195–204.

GIACAMAN 1997 – Hannah Giacaman, “Familles et quartiers”, in Revault/Santelli/Weill-Rochant 1997, pp. 31–40.

GIANI GALLINO 1996 – Tilde Giani Gallino, *L'albero di Jesse. L'immaginario collettivo medievale e la sessualità dissimulata*, Torino 1996.

GIL 1997 – Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*, Cambridge 1997.

GIRAUDET 1583 – Gabriel Giraudet, *Discours du voyage d'Outremer au Saint Sépulchre de Jérusalem et autres lieux de la Terre Sainte*, Toulouse 1583.

GOETZ/GUNDERMANN 1878 – Georg Goetz, Gotthold Gundermann, *Glossae latinograecae et graecolatinae*, (Corpus glossariorum latinorum 2), Leipzig 1878.

GOITEIN 1967–1993 – Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, Berkeley 1967–1993.

GÓMEZ-GÉRAUD 1999 – Marie-Christine Gómez-Géraud, *Le crépuscule du Grand Voyage. Les récits des pèlerins à Jérusalem (1458–1612)*, Paris 1999.

GONEN 1998 – *To the Holy Graves: Pilgrimage to the Holy Graves and Hillulot in Israel*, Rivka Gonen ed., Jerusalem 1998.

GRABAR 1946 – André Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols, Paris 1946.

GRABAR 1957 – André Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique*, Paris 1957.

GRABAR 1958 – André Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte*, Paris 1958.

GRABAR 1987 – Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven/London 1987.

GRABAR 2006 – Oleg Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock*, Cambridge, MA/London 2006.

GRABAR/KEDAR 2009 – *Where Heaven and Hearth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade*, Oleg Grabar, Benjamin Z. Kedar eds, Jerusalem/Austin 2009.

GRATZIOU 1998 – Olga Gratziou, “Ο σταυρός ως λατρευτικό αντικείμενο του πρωτοβυζαντινού ναού: Ένα παράδειγμα από την Κρήτη”, *Δελτίον της χριστιανικής αρχαιολογικής εταιρείας*, iv/20 (1998), pp. 71–80.

GRODECKI 1976 – Louis Grodecki, *Études sur les vitraux de Suger à Saint-Denis. I*, (Corpus vitrearum. France. Études, I), Paris 1976.

GUARDUCCI 1981 – Margherita Guarducci, “Camerae fulgentes”, in *Letterature comparate: problemi di metodo. Studi in onore di Ettore Paratore*, Bologna 1981, pp. 799–817.

HABAS 2008 – Lihi Habas, “Donations and Donors as Reflected in the Mosaic Pavements of Transjordan Churches in the Byzantine and Umayyad Periods”, in *Between Judaism and Christianity. Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*, Leiden 2008, pp. 73–90.

HACHLILI 2009 – Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements. Themes, Issues, and Trends. Selected Studies*, Leiden/Boston 2009.

HALBWACHS 1941 [2008] – Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte. Étude de mémoire collective* [1941], Marie Jaisson ed., Paris 2008.

HAMILTON 1934 – Robert W. Hamilton, “Excavations in the Atrium of the Church of the

Nativity”, *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, iii (1934), pp. 1–8.

HAMILTON 1947 – Robert W. Hamilton, *The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. A Guide*, Jerusalem 1947.

HAMILTON 1949 – Robert W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, London 1949.

HAMILTON 1980 – Bernard Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church*, London 1980.

HANNA VARDAPET 1727 [1807] – Hanna [Yovhannes] Vardapet, *Girk' Patmut'ean srboy yev meci K'alak'is Astucoy Yerasalēmis yev srboč tnōri-nakanac teleac Teārē meroy Yisusi K'ristosi* [Book of the History of Jerusalem, the Holy and Great City of God, and of the Holy Sites/Places of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, 1727], Constantinople 1807.

HARTMANN/PENNINGTON 2012 – *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, Wilfried Hartmann, Kenneth Pennington eds, Washington, D.C. 2012.

HARVEY 1911 – William Harvey, “A Particular Description of the Church”, in Weir Schulz 1910, pp. 1–12.

HARVEY 1935 – William Harvey, *Structural Survey of the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem*, London 1935.

HARVEY 1936 – William Harvey, “The Early Basilica at Bethlehem”, *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, lxxviii (1936), pp. 28–33.

HARVEY/HARVEY 1937 – William Harvey, John Hooper Harvey, “Recent Discoveries at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem”, *Archaeologia*, lxxxvii (1937), pp. 7–18.

HASSON 1996 – “The Muslim View of Jerusalem – The Qur'an and the Ḥadīth”, in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period 638–1099*, Jerusalem 1996, pp. 349–385.

HAWKINS/MUNDELL/MANGO 1973 – Ernest J. W. Hawkins, Marlia C. Mundell, Cyril A. Mango, “The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mar Samuel, Mar Simeon, and Mar Gabriel near Kartmin with

a Note on the Greek Inscription”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxvii (1973), pp. 279–296.

HAYDEN/MATAR 2013 – *Through the Eyes of the Beholder. The Holy Land, 1517–1713*, Judy A. Hayden, Nabil I. Matar eds, Leiden/Boston 2013.

HAZARD 1977 – *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, Harry W. Hazard ed., (A History of the Crusades, Kenneth M. Setton ed., vol. iv), Madison, WI 1977.

HEISENBERG 1908 – August Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche. Band i: Grabeskirche*, Leipzig 1908.

HELTEN 1985 – Leonhard Helten, “Der Grundriß der Elisabethkirche in Marburg”, *Hessische Heimat*, xxxv (1985), pp. 175–182.

HELTULA 1989 – Anne Helttula, “Mushrooms in Ancient Greece and Rome”, *Opuscula Instituti Romani Finlandiae*, iv (1989), pp. 17–42.

HEPPER/GIBSON 1994 – F. Nigel Hepper, Shimon Gibson, “Abraham's Oak of Mamre: The Story of a Venerable Tree”, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, cxxvi (1994), pp. 94–105.

HETHERINGTON 1990 – Paul Hetherington, “Who is the King of Glory? The Byzantine Enamels of An Icon Frame and Revetment in Jerusalem”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, lxxiii (1990), pp. 25–38.

HEYMAN 2015 – Avital Heyman, “Fulcher's Bestiary at the Door of the Holy Sepulchre”, *Ad Limina*, vi (2015), pp. 33–80.

HILLENBRAND 2016 – Carole Hillenbrand, “Merits of Jerusalem (Fada'il al-Quds)”, in Drake Boehm/Holcomb 2016, pp. 84–85.

HINTLIAN 1989 – Kevork Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1989.

HIRSCHBERG 1951–1952 – J. W. Hirschberg, “The Sources of Muslim Traditions Concerning Jerusalem”, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, xvii (1951–1952), pp. 314–350.

HIRSCHFELD 1992 – Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period*, New Haven/London 1992.

HITZEL 2013 – Frédéric Hitzel, “Vicissitudes de la présence franciscaine en Terre sainte sous l’occupation ottomane”, in Degout/Charles-Gaffiot 2013, pp. 76–85.

HOUGHTON 1885 – William Houghton, “Notices of Fungi in Greek and Latin Authors”, *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* xv (1885), pp. 22–49.

HOWARD-JOHNSTON 2010 – James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*, Oxford 2010.

HUBERT 1934 – Jean Hubert, “Note sur l’histoire de l’abbaye de Ferrière”, *Annales de la Société historique et archéologique du Gâtinais*, XLII (1934), pp. 95–114.

HUNT 1982 – Edward David Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire. A.D. 312–460*, Oxford 1982.

HUNT 1991 – Lucy-Ann Hunt, “Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of ‘Crusader’ Art”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLV (1991), pp. 69–85.

HUNT 1995 – Lucy-Ann Hunt, “Artistic and Cultural Inter-Relations between Christian Communities at the Holy Sepulchre in the 12th Century”, in O’Mahony/Gunner/Hintlian 1995, pp. 57–96.

HUNT 2009 – Lucy-Ann Hunt, “Eastern Christian Art and Culture in the Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods: Cultural Convergence between Jerusalem, Greater Syria and Egypt”, in Auld/Hillenbrand 2009, pp. 327–347.

IMMERZEEL 2009 – Mat Immerzeel, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven 2009.

JACOBY 1990 – Zehava Jacoby, “The Medieval Doors of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem”, in *Le porte di bronzo dall’Antichità al secolo XIII*, Salvatore Salomi ed., Rome 1990, pp. 121–134.

JACOBY 2001 – David Jacoby, “Pilgrimage in Crusader Acre: The Pardons d’Acre”, in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum Domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, Yitzhak Hen ed., Turnhout 2001, pp. 105–117.

JÄGER 1930 – Roland Jäger, “Die Bronzetüren von Bethlehem”, *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, XLV (1930), pp. 91–115.

JANIN 1969 – Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire byzantine. Première partie. Le siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat œcuménique*, Paris 1969.

JEREMIAS 1958 – Joachim Jeremias, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt (Mt. 23, 29; Lk. 11, 47). Eine Untersuchung zur Volksreligion der Zeit Jesu*, Göttingen 1958.

JOÃO DE JESUS CHRISTO 1822 – João de Jesus Christo, *Viagem de hum peregrino a Jerusalem, e visita que fez aos Lugares Santos em 1817 Fr. João de Jesus Christo, indigno filho do Serafico Patriarcha S. Francisco*, Lisbon 1822.

JOHNS 1931–1932 – Cedric N. Johns, “Excavations at Pilgrims’ Castle, ‘Atlit’, Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine, IV (1931–1932), pp. 122–137.

JOTISCHKY 1994 – Andrew Jotischky, “Manuel Comnenus and the Reunion of the Churches: the Evidence of the Conciliar Mosaics in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem”, *Levant*, XXVI (1994), pp. 207–223.

JOTISCHKY 2001 – Andrew Jotischky, “Greek Orthodox and Latin Monasticism around Mar Saba under Crusader Rule”, in *Patrich* 2001a, pp. 85–96.

JUGIE 1923 – Martin Jugie, “La première fête mariale en Orient et en Occident. L’Avent primitif”, *Échos d’Orient*, XXII/130 (1923), pp. 129–152.

JUGIE 1943 – Martin Jugie, “La fête de la Dormition et de l’Assomption de la sainte Vierge en Orient et en Occident”, *L’année théologique*, IV (1943), pp. 11–42.

JUHASZ 1950 – V. Juhasz, “Las pinturas de los Cruzados en la basilica de Belén”, *Tierra Santa*, XXV (1950), pp. 313–318, 349–353.

KALOKYRIS 1999 – Konstantinos D. Kalokyris, *Το αρχιτεκτονικό συγκρότημα του ναού της Αναστάσεως Ιεροσολύμων και το θέμα του Αγίου Φωτός*, Thessaloniki 1999.

KALOPISSI-VERTI 1994 – Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, “Painters in Late Byzantine Society. The Evidence of Church Inscriptions”, *Cahiers archéologiques*, XLII (1994), pp. 139–158.

KALOPISSI-VERTI 1997 – Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, “Οι ζωγράφοι στην ύστερη βυζαντινή κοινωνία. Η μαρτυρία των επιγραφών”, in Vassilaki 1997a, pp. 121–159.

KALOPISSI-VERTI 2007 – Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, “Painters’ Information on Themselves in Late Byzantine Church Inscriptions”, in Bacci 2007, pp. 55–70.

KAPLONY 2002 – Andreas Kaplony, *The Haram of Jerusalem (324–1009). Temple, Friday Mosque, Area of Spiritual Power*, Stuttgart 2002.

KAPLONY 2009 – Andreas Kaplony, “635/638–1099: The Mosque of Jerusalem (Masjid Bayt al-Maqdis)”, in Grabar/Kedar 2009, pp. 100–131.

KARAGIANNI 2010 – Alexandra V. Karagianni, *Ο σταυρός στη βυζαντινή μνημειακή ζωγραφική. Η λειτουργία και το δογματικό του περιεχόμενο*, PhD thesis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Thessaloniki 2010.

KARKENNY 1976 – Yacoub Koriah Karkenny, *The Syrian Orthodox Church in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1976.

KATSIMBINIS 1975 – Christos Katsimbinis, “La Grotta dei Pastori – Betlemme”, *Liber Annuus*, XXV (1975), p. 53.

KAUFHOLD 2012 – Hubert Kaufhold, “Sources of Canon Law in the Eastern Churches”, in Hartmann/Pennington 2012, pp. 215–342.

KAUTZSCH 1936 – Rudolf Kautzsch, *Kapitelstudien. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte des spätantiken*

Kapitells im Osten vom vierten bis ins siebente Jahrhundert, Leipzig 1936.

KAZANAKI 1974 – Maria Kazanaki, “Η εκκλησιαστική ξυλογλυπτική στον Χάνδακα τον 17ο αιώνα”, *Θησαυρίσματα*, XI (1974), pp. 251–283.

KAZARYAN 2012 – Armen Kazaryan, *Церковная архитектура стран Закавказья VII века. Формирование и развитие традиции/ Church Architecture of the 7th Century in Transcaucasian Countries. Formation and Development of the Tradition*, Moscow 2012.

KEDAR 1992 – Benjamin Z. Kedar, *The Horns of Hattin. Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Jerusalem and Haifa, July 1987*, Jerusalem/London 1992.

KEDAR/PRINGLE 2009 – Benjamin Z. Kedar, Denys Pringle, “1099–1187: The Lord’s Temple (Templum Domini) and Solomon’s Palace (Palatium Salomonis)”, in Grabar/Kedar 2009, pp. 132–149.

KEDAR/MAYER/SMAIL 1982 – Outremer. *Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer*, Benjamin Z. Kedar, Hans Eberhard Mayer, Raimund C. Smail eds, Jerusalem 1982.

KEEL/KÜCHLER 1982 – Othmar Keel, Max Küchler, *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel. Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zum Heiligen Land. Band 2: Der Süden*, Zurich/Göttingen 1982.

KENAN 1973 – Nurith Kenaan, “Local Christian Art in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XXIII (1973), pp. 221–229.

KENAN-KEDAR 1999 – Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, “The Two Lintels of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem”, in Rozenberg 1999, pp. 176–185.

KESHMAN 2013 – Anastasia Keshman, “Crusader Wall Mosaics in the Holy Land. Gustav Kühnel’s Work in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem”, *Arte medievale*, IV/3 (2013), pp. 257–270.

KHATCHADOURIAN/BASMADJIAN 2014 – Haroutioun Khatchadourian, Michel Basmadjian, *L'art des khatchkars, les pierres à croix arméniennes d'Ispahan et de Jérusalem*, Paris 2014.

KHUSKIVADZE 2005 – Leila Khuskivadze, *The Mosaic of Gelati*, Tbilisi 2005.

KILDANI 2010 – Hanna Kildani, *Modern Christianity in the Holy Land*, Bloomington, in 2010.

KINNEY 2011 – Dale Kinney, "The 'Praesepia' in Santa Maria Trastevere and Santa Maria Maggiore", in *Marmoribus vestita. Miscellanea in onore di Federico Guidobaldi*, Olof Brandt, Philippe Pergola eds, Vatican City 2011, vol. II, pp. 777–795.

KINNEY 2016 – Dale Kinney, "The Type of the Triconch Basilica", in *The Red Monastery Church. Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt*, Elisabeth Bolman ed., New Haven/London 2016, pp. 37–47.

KIRSTEIN 2002 – Klaus-Peter Kirstein, *Die lateinischen Patriarchen von Jerusalem. Von der Eroberung der Heiligen Stadt durch die Kreuzfahrer 1099 bis zum Ende der Kreuzfahrerstaaten 1291*, Berlin 2002.

KISTER 1969 – Meir J. Kister, "You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques. A Study of an Early Tradition", *Le Muséon*, LXXXII (1969), pp. 173–196.

KITSCHENBERG 1988 – Matthias Kitschenberg, "Die Dreikonchenanlage von St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln. Zur Tradition und Innovation einer mittelalterlichen Bauform", *Colonia Romanica*, III (1988), pp. 11–23.

KITSCHENBERG 1990 – Matthias Kitschenberg, *Die Kleeblattanlage von St. Maria im Kapitol zu Köln*, Köln 1990.

KITZINGER 1965 – Ernst Kitzinger, "Stylistic Developments in the Pavement Mosaics in the Greek East from the Age of Constantine to the Age of Justinian", in *La Mosaique gréco-romaine*, Paris 1965, pp. 341–351.

KITZINGER 1970 – Ernst Kitzinger, "The Threshold of the Holy Shrine: Observations on Floor Mosaics at Antioch and Bethlehem", in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quastern*, Patrick

Granfield, Josef A. Jungmann eds, Münster 1970, pp. 639–647.

KITZINGER 1988 – Ernst Kitzinger, "Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art", *Cahiers archéologiques*, XXXVI (1988), pp. 51–73.

KLAMETH 1923 – Klameth Gustav, *Die neutesamentlichen Lokaltraditionen Palästinas in der Zeit vor den Kreuzzügen*, Munich 1923.

KLEIN 2004 – Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das "wahre" Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden 2004.

KLEINBAUER 1998 – Eugene W. Kleinbauer, "The Anastasis Rotunda and Christian Architectural Invention", in Kühnel B. 1998, pp. 140–146.

KLIMAS 2012 – Narcyz Klimas, "La Custodia di Terra Santa ed il suo archivio", in Maiarelli 2012, vol. I, pp. 77–118.

KOFISKY 1998 – Arie Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?", in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land, First-Fifteenth Centuries CE*, Arie Kofsky, Guy Stroumsa eds, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 19–30.

KOMINKO 2010 – Maja Kominko, "Byzantine, Syriac, Armenian and Latin. A Note on Artistic Interaction in Eastern Mediterranean Manuscripts", *Eastern Christian Art*, VII (2010), pp. 59–70.

KOPP 1959 – Clemens Kopp, *Die heiligen Stätten der Evangelien*, Regensburg 1959.

KORN 2009 – Lorenz Korn, "Ayyubid Mosaics in Jerusalem", in Auld/Hillenbrand 2009, pp. 377–387.

KRAUTHEIMER 1981 – Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, London 1981.

KRAUTHEIMER 1986 – Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. revised by Richard Krautheimer, Slobodan Ćurčić, New Haven 1986.

KROLL 1978 – Gerhard Kroll, *Auf den Spuren Jesu*, Stuttgart 1978.

KRÖNUNG 2010 – Bettina Krönung, "Al-Ḥākim und die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche", in Pratsch 2010, pp. 139–158.

KRUEGER 2014 – Derek Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects. Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium*, Philadelphia 2014.

KRÜGER 2000 – Jürgen Krüger, *Die Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem. Geschichte – Gestalt – Bedeutung*, Regensburg 2000.

KUBIŚ 2013 – Adam Kubiś, "Betlejem – Pomiedzy teologia, historia i archeologia", *Resovia sacra*, XVIII/20 (2011–2013), pp. 9–29.

KÜCHLER 2007 – Max Küchler, *Jerusalem. Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zur Heiligen Stadt*, Göttingen 2007.

KÜHNEL 1984 – Gustav Kühnel, "Neue Feldarbeiten zur musivischen und malerischen Ausstattung der Geburtsbasilika in Bethlehem", *Kunstchronik*, XII (1984), pp. 503–513.

KÜHNEL 1987 – Gustav Kühnel, "Das Ausschmückungsprogramm der Geburtsbasilika in Bethlehem. Byzanz und Abendland im Königreich Jerusalem", *Boreas*, X (1987), pp. 133–149.

KÜHNEL 1988 – Gustav Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Berlin 1988.

KÜHNEL 1993 – Gustav Kühnel, "The Twelfth-Century Decoration of the Church of the Nativity: Eastern and Western Concord", in Tsafir 1993a, pp. 197–203.

KÜHNEL 1993–1994 – Gustav Kühnel, "Die Konzilsdarstellungen in der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem: Ihre kunsthistorische Tradition und ihr kirchenpolitisch-historischer Hintergrund", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, LXXXVI–LXXXVII (1993–1994), pp. 86–107.

KÜHNEL 1998 – Gustav Kühnel, "Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: The Dating of a Newly Recovered Tessera of Crusader Mosaic Decoration", in Kühnel B. 1998, pp. 151–157.

KÜHNEL 1999 – Gustav Kühnel, "Crusader Monumental Painting and Mosaic", in Rozenberg 1999, pp. 202–215.

KÜHNEL 2001 – Gustav Kühnel, "Palestinian Monasticism and Political Iconography", in Patrich 2001a, pp. 354–362.

KÜHNEL B. 1987A – Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium*, Rome 1987.

KÜHNEL B. 1987B – Bianca Kühnel, "Der Rankenfries am Portal der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem und die romanische Skulptur in den Abruzzes", *Arte Medievale*, n.s., I (1987), pp. 87–121.

KÜHNEL B. 1994 – Bianca Kühnel, *Crusader Art of the Twelfth Century. A Geographical, an Historical, or an Art-Historical Notion?*, Berlin 1994.

KÜHNEL B. 1998 – *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Art*, Bianca Kühnel ed., Jerusalem 1998.

KÜHNEL B. 2010 – Bianca Kühnel, "Productive Destruction: The Holy Sepulchre after 1009", in Pratsch 2010, pp. 139–158.

KÜHNEL/NOGA-BANAI/VORHOLT 2014 – *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai, Hanna Vorholt eds, Turnhout 2014.

KÜLZER 1994 – Andreas Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam: Studien zu Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main, 1994.

LA MONTE 1932 – John L. La Monte, "To What Extent was the Byzantine Empire the Suzerain of the Latin Crusading States?", *Byzantion*, VII (1932), pp. 253–264.

LABORDE 1837 – Léon de Laborde, *Voyage de la Syrie par Mrs. Alexandre de Laborde, Becker, Hall et Léon de Laborde*, Paris 1837.

LAFFI 1683 – Domenico Laffi, *Viaggio in Levante al Santo Sepolcro di N. S. G. Christo et altri luoghi di Terra Santa*, Bologna 1683.

LAGENISSIÈRE 1872 – Louis Chevalier Lagenissière, *Histoire de l'évêché de Bethléem*, Paris/Nevers 1872.

LANZONI 1921 – Francesco Lanzoni, "Il sepolcro di S. Girolamo", *La Scuola cattolica*, XLIX (1921), pp. 383–390.

LEMMENS 1919 – Leonhard Lemmens, *Die Franziskaner im Hl. Lande. I. Teil: Die Franziskaner auf dem Sion (1336–1551)*, Münster 1919.

LETHABY 1910 – William R. Lethaby, “A General Historical and Descriptive Account”, in Weir Schultz 1910, pp. 13–30.

LEVI D’ANCONA 1977 – Mirella Levi d’Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance. Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, Florence 1977.

LIDOV 1998 – Alexei M. Lidov, “Byzantine Church Decoration and the Great Schism of 1054”, *Byzantion*, LXVIII (1998), pp. 381–405.

LIDOV 1998 – Alexei M. Lidov, “Heavenly Jerusalem: The Byzantine Approach”, in Kühnel B. 1998, pp. 340–353.

LIDOV 2006 – Иеротопия. Создание сакральных пространств в Византии и древней Руси/ Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia, Alexei M. Lidov ed., Moscow 2006.

LIDOV 2013 – Alexei M. Lidov, *Иконы. Мир святых образов в Византии и на Руси/Icons. World of Holy Images in Byzantium and in Russia*, Moscow 2013.

LILIE 1981 – Ralph-Johannes Lilie, *Byzanz und die Kreuzfahrerstaaten. Studien zur Politik des Byzantinischen Reiches gegenüber den Staaten der Kreuzfahrer in Syrien und Palästina bis zum vierten Kreuzzug*, Munich 1981.

LIMOR 2001 – Ora Limor, “Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula, and the Christian Holy Land”, in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, Ytzhak Hen ed., Turnhout 2001, pp. 1–15.

LIMOR 2007 – Ora Limor, “Sharing Sacred Space: Holy Places in Jerusalem between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam”, in *In Laudem Hierosolymitani. Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, Iris Shagrir, Ronnie Ellenblum, Jonathan Riley-Smith eds, Aldershot 2007, pp. 219–232.

LINDNER 1992 – Molly Lindner, “Topography and Iconography in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem”, in Kedar 1992, pp. 81–98.

LIVERANI 1854 – Francesco Liverani, *Del nome di Santa Maria ad Praesepe che la Basilica liberiana porta e delle reliquie della Natività e Infanzia del Salvatore che conserva*, Rome 1854.

LIVERANI 2003 – Paolo Liverani, “Camerae e coperture delle basiliche paleocristiane”, in *Il Liber Pontificalis e la storia materiale*, Herman Geertman ed., (Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome 60–61), Rome 2003, pp. 13–28.

LIVNE-KAFRI 1998 – Ofer Livne-Kafri, “The Muslim Traditions ‘In Praise of Jerusalem’ (Faḍā’il al-Quds): Diversity and Complexity”, *Annali dell’Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”*, LVIII (1998), pp. 165–192.

LOSITO 2014 – Maria Losito, *La Basilica della Natività di Betlemme e il “De anno Natali Christi” di Johannes Kepler. Architettura, liturgia e astronomia*, Bari 2014.

LUCHTERHANDT 2007 – Manfred Luchterhandt, “‘In medio ecclesiae’. Frühmittelalterliche Kreuzmonumente und die Anfänge des Stiftergrabes”, in *Docta Manus. Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke*, Johannes Myssok, Jürgen Wiener eds, Münster 2007, pp. 11–29.

LUSIGNAN 1753 – Saviour Lusignan, *Reise nach der Türkei und einem Theil der Levante nebst einer Beschreibung von Palästina*, Hamburg 1789.

MAAS 2005 – *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Michael Maas ed., Cambridge 2005.

MACCHIONI [ET AL.] 2012 – Nicola Macchioni, Michele Brunetti, Benedetto Pizzo, Paolo Burato, Michela Nocetti and Sabrina Palanti, “The Timber Structures in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem: Typologies and Diagnosis”, in Alessandri 2012, pp. 42–53.

MACCORMACK 1990 – Sabine MacCormack, “Loca sancta: The Organization of Sacred

Topography in Late Antiquity”, in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, Robert Ousterhout ed., Chicago 1990, pp. 7–40.

MACQUARRIE 1982 – Alan Denis MacQuarrie, *The Impact of the Crusading Movement in Scotland, 1095–c. 1560*, PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1982), unpublished.

MADDEN 2012A – Andrew M. Madden, “A Revised Date for the Mosaic Pavements of the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem”, *Ancient West and East*, XI (2012), pp. 147–190.

MADDEN 2012B – Andrew M. Madden, “A New Form of Evidence to Date the Madaba Map Mosaic”, *Liber Annuus*, LXII (2012), pp. 495–513.

MADDEN 2014 – Andrew M. Madden, *Corpus of Byzantine Church Mosaic Pavements from Israel and the Palestinian Territories*, Leuven 2014.

MAGDALINO 2002 – Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180*, Cambridge 2002.

MAGUIRE 1974 – Henry Maguire, “Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXXI (1974), pp. 111–140.

MAHONEY 2015 – Lisa Mahoney, “The Frankish Icon: Art and Devotion in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem”, in *The Crusades and Visual Culture*, Elizabeth Lapina, April Jehan Morris, Susanna A. Troop, Laura J. Whately eds, Farnham 2015, pp. 15–34.

MAIARELLI 2012 – *L’archivio storico della Custodia di Terra Santa (1230–1970)*, Andrea Maiarelli ed., Milan 2012.

MANCINI 1968 – Ignazio Mancini, *Le scoperte archeologiche sui giudeo-cristiani. Note storiche*, Assisi 1968.

MANGO 1963 – Cyril Mango, “The Conciliar Edict of 1166”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XVII (1963), pp. 315–330.

MANGO 1974 – Cyril Mango, *Architettura bizantina*, Milan 1974.

MARAVAL 2002 – Pierre Maraval, “The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East before the 7th Century”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, LVI (2002), pp. 63–74.

MARAVAL 1985 [2011] – Pierre Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient. Histoire et géographie, des origines à la conquête arabe*, Paris 2011 [1985].

MARÇAIS 1945 – Georges Marçais, “Le carré quadrilobé. Histoire d’une forme décorative de l’art gothique”, *Études d’art publiées par le Musée national des beaux-arts d’Alger*, I (1945), pp. 67–78.

MARINIS 2015 – Vasileios Marinis, “The *Historia Ekklesiastike kai Mystike Theoria*: A Symbolic Understanding of the Byzantine Church Building”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, CVIII (2015), pp. 753–770.

MARKUS 1990 – Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge 1990.

MARKUS 1994 – Robert A. Markus, “How on Earth Could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, II (1994), pp. 257–271.

MATAR 2013 – Nabil I. Matar, “The Sufi and the Chaplain: ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī and Henry Maundrell”, in Hayden/Matar 2013, pp. 165–184.

MATAR 2016 – Nabil I. Matar, “The Cradle of Jesus and the Oratory of Mary on Jerusalem’s Haram al-Sharif”, in Drake Boehm/Holcomb 2016, pp. 138–140.

MAYER 1977 – Hans E. Mayer, *Bistümer, Klöster und Stifte im Königreich Jerusalem*, Stuttgart 1977.

MCCORMICK 2011 – Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne’s Survey of the Holy Land. Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church between Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Washington, D.C. 2011.

MEINARDUS 1995 – Otto Meinardus, “The Copts in Jerusalem and the Question of the Holy Sites”, in O’Mahony/Gunner/Hintlian 1995, pp. 112–128.

MENNA 2002 – Raffaella Menna, “Immagini e scritte nei mosaici della chiesa della Natività di Betlemme”, in Calò Mariani 2002, pp. 647–658.

MEYER-BARKHAUSEN 1930 – Werner von Meyer-Barkhausen, “Zum Grundrißproblem der Marburger Elisabethkirche”, *Hessenland*, XLII/12 (1930), pp. 367–372.

MIETKE 1991 – Gabriele Mietke, *Die Bautätigkeit Bischof Meinwerks von Paderborn und die frühchristliche und byzantinische Architektur*, Paderborn 1991.

MILIK 1960 – Józef T. Milik, “Notes d’épigraphie et de topographie palestiniennes”, *Revue Biblique*, LXVIII (1960), pp. 590–591.

MILWRIGHT 2016 – Marcus Milwright, *The Dome of the Rock and Its Umayyad Inscriptions*, Edinburgh 2016.

MIMOUNI 2011 – Simon Claude Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l’Assomption de Marie. Études littéraires, historiques et doctrinales*, Leiden/Boston 2011.

MORGENSTERN 2011 – Michael Morgenstern, “Christian Palestinian Aramaic”, in *The Semitic Languages. An International Handbook*, Stefan Weninger ed., Berlin 2011, pp. 628–636.

MOURIKI 1981 – Doula Mouriki, “The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mystra. Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting”, *Δελτίον τῆς χριστιανικῆς ἀρχαιολογικῆς ἐταιρείας*, IV/10 (1980–1981), pp. 307–338.

MUTAFIAN 2004 – Claude Mutfian, “Prélats et souverains arméniens à Jérusalem à l’époque des Croisades: légendes et certitudes (XIIe–XIVe siècles)”, *Studia Orientalia Christiana Collectanea*, XXXVII (2004), pp. 109–151.

MUTAFIAN 2012 – Claude Mutfian, *L’Arménie du Levant (XI^e–XIV^e siècle)*, Paris 2012.

NARKISS 1979 – Bezalel Narkiss, “The Armenian Treasures of Jerusalem”, in *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*, Bezalel Narkiss ed., Jerusalem 1979, pp. 21–144.

NASRALLAH 1974 – Joseph Nasrallah, “Syriens et Suriens”, in *Symposium Syriacum 1972 célébré dans les jours 26–31 octobre 1972 à l’Institut Pontifical Oriental de Rome. Rapports et communications*, Rome 1974, pp. 487–504.

NASRALLAH 1987 – Joseph Nasrallah, “La liturgie des Patriarcats melchites de 969 à 1300”, *Oriens Christianus*, LXXI (1987), pp. 156–181.

NAU 1757 – Michel Nau, *Voyage nouveau de la Terre-Sainte* [1676], Paris 1757.

NEES 2016 – Lawrence Nees, *Perspectives on Early Islamic Art in Jerusalem*, Leiden 2016.

NERI/VERITÀ/BIRON/GUERRA 2016 – Elisabetta Neri, Marco Verità, Isabelle Biron, Maria Filomena Guerra, “Glass and Gold: Analyses of 4th–12th Centuries Levantine Mosaic Tesserae. A Contribution to Technological and Chronological Knowledge”, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, LXX (2016), pp. 158–171.

NOONAN 2007 – F. Thomas Noonan, *The Road to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage and Travel in the Age of Discovery*, Philadelphia 2007.

NORRIS 2013 – Jacob Norris, “Exporting the Holy Land: Artisans and Merchant Migrants in Ottoman-Era Bethlehem”, *Mashriq & Mahjar*, II (2013), pp. 14–40.

O’LOUGHLIN 2007 – Thomas O’Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places. The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on the Locations of the Biblical Drama*, London/New York 2007.

O’MAHONY/GUNNER/HINTLIAN 1995 – *The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, Anthony O’Mahony, Göran Gunner, Kevork Hintlian eds, London 1995.

OHME 2012 – Heinz Ohme, “Sources of the Greek Canon Law to the Quinisext Council (691/2): Councils and Church Fathers”, in Hartmann/Pennington 2012, pp. 24–114.

OSHRI 2005 – Aviram Oshri, “Where Was Jesus Born?”, *Archaeology*, LVIII/6 (2005), pp. 42–45.

OSHRI 2008 – Aviram Oshri, “Bethlehem of Galilee”, in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. v. Supplementary Volume*, Ephraim Stern ed., Jerusalem/Washington, d.c. 2008, pp. 1609–1611.

OSWALD 1969 – Friedrich Oswald, “In medio ecclesiae: Die Deutung der literarischen Zeugnisse im Lichte archäologischer Funde”, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, III (1969), pp. 313–326.

OUSTERHOUT 1990 – Robert Ousterhout, “The Temple, the Sepulchre and the Martyrion of the Savior”, *Gesta*, XXIX (1990), pp. 44–53.

OVADIAH 1970 – Asher Ovadia, *Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Bonn 1970.

OVADIAH/OVADIAH 1987 – Ruth Ovadia, Asher Ovadia, *Mosaic Pavements in Israel: Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine*, Rome 1987.

PAHLITZSCH 2001 – Johannes Pahlitzsch, *Graeci und Suriani im Palästina der Kreuzfahrerzeit. Beiträge und Quellen zur Geschichte des griechisch-orthodoxen Patriarchats von Jerusalem*, Berlin 2001.

PALLAS 1978 – Demetrios I. Pallas, “Une note sur la décoration de la chapelle de Hagios Basileios de Sinasos”, *Byzantion*, XLVIII (1978), pp. 208–225.

PALLAS 1979 – Demetrios I. Pallas, “Sur le problème de l’évolution du temple en iconostase”, in *Actes du xve congrès international d’études byzantines. Athènes – Septembre 1976*, Athens 1979, vol. I, pp. 367–371.

PALMER 1991 – Andrew Palmer, “The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem”, *Oriens Christianus*, LXXV (1991), pp. 16–43.

PALMER 1992 – Andrew Palmer, “The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem. Part Two: Queen Melisende and the Jacobite Estates”, *Oriens Christianus*, LXXVI (1992), pp. 74–94.

PANAGIOTIDI 2007 – Maria Panagiotidi, “Le peintre en tant que scribe des inscriptions d’un monument et la question du niveau de sa connaissance grammaticale et orthographique”, in Bacci 2007, pp. 71–116.

PAPADOPOULOS 1900 – Chrysostomos A. Papadopoulos [Archbishop Chrysostom I of Greece], *Ἡ ἐκκλησία Ἱεροσολύμων κατὰ τοὺς τέσσαρας τελευταίους αἰῶνας 1517–1900*, Athens 1900.

PAPADOPOULOS 1910 [2010] – Chrysostomos A. Papadopoulos [Archbishop Chrysostom I of Greece], *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*

Ἱεροσολύμων, Alexandria 1910 [new ed. Athens 2010].

PARAVICINI 1999–2001 – *Europäische Reiseberichte des späten Mittelalters: eine analytische Bibliographie*, Werner Paravicini ed., Frankfurt am Main 1999–2001.

PATRICH 2001A – *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, Joseph Patrich ed., Leuven 2001.

PATRICH 2001B – Joseph Patrich, “The Sabaite Heritage: An Introductory Survey”, in Patrich 2001a, pp. 1–30.

PAULUS 1913 – Nikolaus Paulus, “Die Ablässe der Kreuzwegandacht”, *Theologie und Glaube*, V (1913), pp. 1–15.

PAVLOVNA WASSON/WASSON 1957 – Valentina Pavlovna Wasson, R. Gordon Wasson, *Mushrooms, Russia and History*, New York 1957.

PERI 2001 – Oded Peri, *Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times*, Leiden 2001.

PERISTERIS 2001 – Aristarchos Peristeris, Bishop of Constantina, “Literary and Scribal Activities at the Monastery of St. Sabas”, in Patrich 2001a, pp. 171–194.

PETROZZI 1985 – Maria Teresa Petrozzi, *Bethléem*, Jerusalem 1985.

PHOKYLIDES 1927 – Ioannes Phokylides, *Ἡ Ἀγία Λαύρα Σάββα τοῦ ἡγιασμένου*, Alexandria 1927.

PIAZZA 2012 – Simone Piazza, “Genesi e fortuna dell’albero di lesse nel XII secolo: Sant’Eusebio prima di Saint-Denis”, in *Le plaisir de l’art au Moyen Âge: commande, production et réception de l’œuvre d’art. Mélanges en hommage à Xavier Barral i Altet*, Paris 2012, pp. 819–825.

PIAZZA 2014 – Simone Piazza, “L’Albero di lesse nel XII fra Oriente e Occidente: note sul perduto mosaico della basilica della Natività a Betlemme”, *Hortus artium medievalium*, XX (2014), pp. 209–217.

PIAZZA 2015 – Simone Piazza, *Au zénith de la coupole. L’oculus romain dans l’art chrétien*

du Moyen Âge: architecture et contextes figuratifs, Habilitation thesis (University of Bourgogne, Dijon 2015), unpublished.

PICCIRILLO 1993 – Michele Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman 1993.

PICCIRILLO 1995 – Michele Piccirillo, “The Christians in Palestine during a Time of Transition: 7th–9th Centuries”, in O’Mahony/Gunner/ Hintlian 1995, pp. 47–56.

PICCIRILLO 1999 – Michele Piccirillo, “Madaba: One Hundred Years from the Discovery”, in Piccirillo/Alliata 1999, pp. 15–24.

PICCIRILLO 2000 – *In Terrasanta: dalla crociata alla custodia dei Luoghi Santi*, Michele Piccirillo ed., Milan 2000.

PICCIRILLO 2002a – *Un uomo di pace. Padre Bellarmino Bagatti (1905–1990)*, Michele Piccirillo ed., Gorle 2002.

PICCIRILLO 2002b – Michele Piccirillo, *L’Arabia Cristiana dalla provincia imperiale al primo periodo islamico*, Milan 2002.

PICCIRILLO 2007 – Michele Piccirillo, *La Nuova Gerusalemme. Artigianato palestinese al servizio dei Luoghi Santi*, Bergamo 2007.

PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1994 – *Umm al-Rasas. Mayfa’ah. i. Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano*, Michele Piccirillo, Eugenio Alliata eds, Jerusalem 1994.

PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1999 – *The Madaba Map Centenary (1897–1997): Travelling Through the Byzantine Umayyad Period. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Amman, 7–9 April 1997*, Michele Piccirillo, Eugenio Alliata eds, Jerusalem 1999.

PICKETT 2014 – Jordan Pickett, “Patronage Contested: Archaeology and the Early Modern Struggle for Possession at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem”, in Kühnel/Noga-Banai/Vorholt 2014, pp. 35–44.

PIETRO ANTONIO DA VENEZIA 1715 – Pietro Antonio da Venezia, *Guida fedele alla Santa Città di Gerusalemme e descrizione di tutta Terra Santa*, Venice 1715.

POCOCKE 1745 – Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries*, London 1745.

POMI 2008 – Damiano Pomi, *La parola si fa arte. Luoghi e significati del Sacro Monte di Varallo*, Milano 2008.

PONSICH 1981 – Pierre Ponsich, “La pensée symbolique et les édifices de Cuxa du Xe au XIIe siècle”, *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa*, XII (1981), pp. 19–25.

PONTANI 1999 – Filippomaria Pontani, “L’artista bizantino: un panorama”, *Bullettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata, n.s.*, LIII (1999), pp. 151–172.

PRAG 2000 – Kay Prag, “Bethlehem: A Site Assessment”, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, CXXXII (2000), pp. 170–181.

PRATSCH 2010 – Konflikt und Bewältigung. Die Zerstörung der Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem im Jahre 1009, Thomas Pratsch ed., Berlin 2010.

PRINGLE 1993–2009 – Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, Cambridge 1993–2009.

PULLAN 1998 – Wendy Pullan, “Jerusalem from Alpha to Omega in the Santa Pudenziana Mosaic”, in Kühnel B. 1998, pp. 405–417.

PULLAN 2000 – Wendy Pullan, “‘Ascent and Descent’ in the Constantinian Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem”, in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*, Waterloo 2000, pp. 308–321.

PUMMER 2002 – Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism. Texts, Translations and Commentary*, Tübingen 2002.

QUARESMI 1639 – Francesco Quaresmi, *Historica, theologica et moralis Terrae Sanctae elucidatio*, Antwerp 1639.

RABBAT 1998 – Nasser Rabbat, “Architects and Artists in Mamluk Society: The Perspective of the Sources”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, LII/1 (1998), pp. 30–37.

RAHEB/STRICKERT 1998 – Mitri Raheb, Frederick M. Strickert, *Bethlehem 2000: Past and Present*, Heidelberg 1998.

RAHMANI 1976 – Levy Y. Rahmani, “The Eastern Lintel of the Holy Sepulchre”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, II/3 (1976), pp. 120–129.

RAHMANI 1979 – Levy Y. Rahmani, “The Adoration of the Magi on Two Sixth-Century C.E. Eulogia Tokens”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XXIX (1979), pp. 34–36.

RAPP 2015 – David Rapp, *The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem*, Herzliya 2015.

RATHGENS 1913 – Hugo Rathgens, *Die Kirche Maria im Kapitol zu Köln*, Düsseldorf 1913.

RESTLE 1966 – Marcell Restle, “Bethlehem”, in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, Stuttgart 1966, vol. I, pp. 599–612.

REVAULT/SANTELLI/WEILL-ROCHANT 1997 – *Maisons de Bethléem*, Philippe Revault, Serge Santelli, Catherine Weill-Rochant eds, Saint-Germain-du-Puy 1997.

RIANT 1885 – Paul de Riant, “La part de l’évêque de Bethléem dans le butin de Constantinople en 1204”, *Mémoires de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France*, XLVI (1885), pp. 225–237.

RIANT 1889–1896 – Paul de Riant, *Études sur l’histoire de l’église de Bethléem*, Geneva/Paris 1889–1896.

RICHARD 1982 – Jean Richard, “Hospitals and Hospital Congregations in the Latin Kingdom during the First Period of the Frankish Conquest”, in Kedar/Mayer/Smail 1982, pp. 89–100.

RICHMOND 1936 – Ernest T. Richmond, “Basilica of the Nativity. Discovery of the Remains of an Earlier Church”, *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, V (1936), pp. 75–81.

RICHMOND 1938 – Ernest T. Richmond, “The Church of the Nativity. The Plan of the Constantinian Church”, *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, VI (1938), pp. 63–72.

ROCCHETTA 1630 – Aquilante della Rocchetta, *Peregrinatione di Terra Santa e d’altre provincie*, Palermo 1630.

RÖHRICHT 1890 – Reinhold Röhricht, *Bibliotheca geographica Palaestinae. Chronologisches Verzeichnis auf die Geographie des hl. Landes bezüglich Litteratur von 333 bis 1878 und Versuch einer Cartographie*, Berlin 1890.

RONCAGLIA 1950 – Martiniano Roncaglia, “The Sons of St. Francis in the Holy Land. Official Entrance of the Franciscans as Custodians of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem”, *Franciscan Studies*, X (1950), pp. 257–285.

ROSE 1992 – Richard B. Rose, “The Native Christians of Jerusalem, 1187–1260”, in Kedar 1992, pp. 239–249.

ROSEN-AYALON 1976 – Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, “Une mosaïque médiévale au Saint-Sépulcre. Contribution à l’histoire de l’art”, *Revue biblique*, LXXXIII (1976), pp. 237–253.

ROSEN-AYALON 1985 – Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, “The Façade of the Holy Sepulchre”, *Rivista degli studi orientali*, LX (1985), pp. 289–296.

ROSEN-AYALON 1989 – Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf. An Iconographic Study*, Jerusalem 1989.

ROSEN-AYALON 1990 – Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, “Art and Architecture in Ayyubid Jerusalem”, *Israel Exploration Journal*, XL (1990), pp. 305–314.

ROUSSEAU 1975 – Pierre Rousseau, “L’église Saint Pierre de Ferrières-en-Gâtinais”, *Études ligériennes d’histoire et d’archéologie médiévales*, René Louis ed., Auxerre 1975, pp. 525–530.

ROZENBERG 1999 – *Knights of the Holy Land. The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, exhibition catalogue (Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, Summer–Fall 1999), Silvia Rozenberg ed., Jerusalem 1999.

RÜCKER 1938–1939 – Adolf Rücker, “Bericht über die archäologischen Ergebnisse und Untersuchungen in der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem”, *Oriens christianus*, XIII (1938–1939), pp. 224–238.

- RUNCIMAN 1951** – Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Cambridge 1951.
- RUNCIMAN 1982** – Steven Runciman, “The Visit of King Amalric I to Constantinople in 1171”, in *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer*, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 153–158.
- RUPRECHTSBERGER 1993** – Erwin M. Ruprechtsberger, “Aspekte der spätantiken und frühislamischen Zeit in Syrien”, in *Syrien. Von den Aposteln zu den Kalifen*, Erwin M. Ruprechtsberger ed., Linz 1993, pp. 201–255.
- SAFRAN 2014** – Linda Safran, *The Medieval Salento. Art and Identity in Southern Italy*, Philadelphia 2014.
- SAHNER 2009** – Christian C. Sahner, “Hierusalem in Laterano: the translation of sacred space in fifth-century Rome”, in *Новые Иерусалимы. Иеротопия и иконография сакральных пространств/New Jerusalem. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, Alexei M. Lidov ed., Moscow 2009, pp. 103–130.
- SAHOURI 2014** – Shireen Sahouri, “Historical Development of Bethlehem”, in *Elter* 2014, pp. 143–162.
- SALETTI 2012** – Beatrice Saletti, “Tracce di indulgenze nel Regno Latino di Gerusalemme. La *Summa stacionum et dedicacionum del codice Arundel 507* (con un’edizione del testo)”, *Annali Online di Ferrara*, I (2012), pp. 269–294.
- SALETTI 2016** – Beatrice Saletti, *I Francescani in Terrasanta (1291–1517)*, Padua 2016.
- SALIGER 1998** – Arthur Saliger, “Zur kunsthistorischen Position der ehemaligen Abteikirche von Ferrières-en-Gâtinais”, *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Christliche Kunst in München*, XX (1998), pp. 65–74.
- SALVARANI 2002** – Renata Salvarani, “San Sepolcro a Milano nella storia delle crociate”, in *Deus non voluit. I Lombardi alla prima crociata (1100–1101). Dal mito alla ricostruzione della realtà*, Giancarlo Andenna ed., Milan 2002, pp. 263–288.
- SALVARANI 2008** – Renata Salvarani, *La fortuna del Santo Sepolcro nel Medioevo*, Milan 2008.
- SARADI 2010** – Helen G. Saradi, “Space in Byzantine Thought”, in Ćurčić/Hadjitryphonos 2010, pp. 72–111.
- SAULNIER 1972** – Lydwine Saulnier, “Ferrières-en-Gâtinais”, *Bulletin monumental*, CXXX (1972), pp. 267–277.
- SAXER 2001** – Victor Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure: une basilique de Rome dans l’histoire de la ville et de son église (ve–XIIIe siècle)*, Rome 2001.
- SCHIAVI 2005** – Luigi Carlo Schiavi, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Milano da Ariberto a Federico Borromeo: genesi ed evoluzione di una chiesa ideale*, Pisa 2005.
- SCHNEIDER 1941** – Alfons Maria Schneider, “Zur Baugeschichte der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem”, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, LIV (1941), pp. 74–91.
- SCHUR 1980** – Nathan Schur, *Jerusalem in Pilgrims and Travellers’ Accounts. A Thematic Bibliography of Western Christian Itineraries 1300–1917*, Jerusalem 1980.
- SCHWAB 2009** – Otmar Schwab, “St. Maria im Kapitol in Köln. Statistisch-konstruktive Probleme der Dreikonchenanlage”, *Colonia Romanica*, XXIV (2009), pp. 133–139.
- SERED 1986** – Susan Starr Sered, “Rachel’s Tomb and the Milk Grotto of the Virgin Mary: Two Women’s Shrines in Bethlehem”, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, II/2 (1986), pp. 7–22.
- SHAHĪD 1995** – Irfan Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Washington, D.C. 1995.
- SHALEV-HURVITZ 2015** – Vered Shalev Hurvitz, *Holy Sites Encircled. The Early Byzantine Concentric Churches of Jerusalem*, Oxford 2015.
- SHANI 1999** – Raya Shani, “The Iconography of the Dome of the Rock”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, XXIII (1999), pp. 158–207.
- SHARON 1999–2013** – Moshe Sharon, *Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum Palaestinae (CIAP)*, vols I–V in continuation, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 1999–2003.
- SHAW 2016** – Richard Shaw, “Chronology, Composition, and Authorial Conception in the *Miracula*”, in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, Alexander Murray ed., Leiden 2016, pp. 102–140.
- SIEBEN 1979** – Hermann Josef Sieben, *Die Konzilsidee in der Alten Kirche*, Paderborn 1979.
- SIEBEN 2005** – Hermann Josef Sieben, *Studien zur Gestalt und Überlieferung der Konzilien*, Paderborn 2005.
- SMITH 1987** – Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place. Toward Theory in Ritual*, Chicago/London 1987.
- SNELDERS 2010** – Bas Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*, Leuven 2010.
- SOTINEL 2005** – Claude Sotinel, “Les lieux de culte chrétiens et le sacré dans l’Antiquité tardive”, *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, CCXXII (2005), pp. 411–434.
- SOUCEK 1998** – Priscilla Soucek, “The Temple after Solomon: The Role of Maryam bint ‘Imrān and her *mihrāb*”, in Kühnel B. 1998, pp. 34–41.
- SPULER 1973** – Christoph Spuler, *Opaion und Laterne. Zur Frage der Beleuchtung antiker und frühchristlicher Bauten durch ein Opaion und zur Entstehung der Kuppellaterne*, PhD thesis (University of Hamburg), Hamburg 1973.
- STEIGERWALD 2012** – Gerhard Steigerwald, “Die edelsteingeschmückten Städte Jerusalem und Bethlehem im Triumphbogenmosaik von S. Maria Maggiore in Rom”, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, LV (2012), pp. 90–102.
- STEIN 1949** – Ernest Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire. II: De la disparition de l’Empire d’Occident à la mort de Justinien (476–565)*, Paris 1949.
- STEKELIS/AVI-YONAH/TZAFAERIS 1993** – Moshe Stekelis, Michael Avi-Yonah, Vassilios Tzaferis, “Bethlehem”, in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Epharim Stern ed., Jerusalem 1993, vol. I, pp. 203–210.
- STERN 1936** – Henri Stern, “Les représentations des conciles dans l’église de la Nativité à Bethléem”, *Byzantion*, XI (1936), pp. 101–152.
- STERN 1938** – Henri Stern, “Les représentations des conciles dans l’église de la Nativité à Bethléem. Deuxième partie. Les inscriptions”, *Byzantion*, XIII (1938), pp. 413–459.
- STERN 1948** – Henri Stern, “Nouvelles recherches sur les représentations des conciles dans l’église de la Nativité à Bethléem”, *Cahiers archéologiques*, III (1948), pp. 82–105.
- STERN 1957** – Henri Stern, “Encore les mosaïques de l’église de la Nativité à Bethléem”, *Cahiers archéologiques*, IX (1957), pp. 141–145.
- STERN 1963** – Henri Stern, “Recherches sur la Mosquée al-Aqṣā et sur ses mosaïques”, *Ars Orientalis*, V (1963), pp. 27–47.
- STONE 1981** – Michael E. Stone, “Epigraphica armeniaca hierosolymitana II”, *Annual of Armenian Linguistics*, II (1981), pp. 72–73.
- STONE 1984** – Michael E. Stone, “Epigraphica armeniaca hierosolymitana III”, *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., XVIII (1984), pp. 559–560.
- STORRS 1936** – Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms*, London 1936.
- STRICKERT 2007** – Fred Strickert, *Rachel Weeping. Jews, Christians, and Muslims at the Fortress Tomb*, Collegeville, MI 2007.
- SWIFT 1936** – Emerson Swift, “Review of Harvey 1935”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, XL (1936), pp. 397–402.
- TALGAM 2004** – Rina Talgam, *The Stylistic Origins of Umayyad Sculpture and Architectural Decoration*, Wiesbaden 2004.
- TALGAM 2014** – Rina Talgam, *Mosaics of Faith. Floors of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 2014.
- TAYLOR 1993** – Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places. The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins*, Oxford 1993.
- TESSERA 2010** – Miriam Rita Tessera, *Orientalis ecclesia. Papato, Chiesa e regno latino di Gerusalemme (1099–1187)*, Milan 2010.
- TESTA 1963–1964** – Emmanuele Testa, “Le ‘grotte dei misteri’ giudeo-cristiane”, *Liber Annuus*, XV (1963–1964), pp. 65–144.
- THEMELIS 1923** – Timotheos Themelis,

“Ἡ ἐν Βηθλεὲμ Βασιλικὴ διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰώνων”, *Νέα Σιών*, xviii (1923), pp. 385–420.

THEMELIS 1934 – Timotheos Themelis, “Τὰ ἐν τῇ Βασιλικῇ τῆς Βηθλεὲμ ἀνακαλυφθέντα μωσαϊκά”, *Νέα Σιών*, xxviii/29 (1934), pp. 388–405.

THÉVENOT 1664 – Jean Thévenot, *Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant*, Paris 1664.

THOMSEN 1922 – Peter Thomsen, *Die lateinischen und griechischen Inschriften der Stadt Jerusalem und ihrer nächsten Umgebung*, Leipzig 1922.

TOBLER 1849 – Titus Tobler, *Bethlehem in Palästina, topographisch und historisch nach Anschau und Quellen geschildert*, St. Gallen/Bern 1849.

TOBLER 1853–1854 – Titus Tobler, *Topographie von Jerusalem und seinen Umgebungen*, Berlin 1853–1854.

TOMASIN 2000 – Lorenzo Tomasin, “Note di antroponimia veneziana medievale (con un testo inedito del primo Trecento)”, *Studi linguistici italiani*, xvii (2000), pp. 130–148.

TROIANOS 2012a – Spyros Troianos, “Byzantine Canon Law to 1100”, in Hartmann/Pennington 2012, pp. 115–169.

TROIANOS 2012b – Spyros Troianos, “Byzantine Canon Law from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries”, in Hartmann/Pennington 2012, pp. 170–214.

TROVATO 2006 – Paolo Trovato, “Per le nozze (rinviare) tra storia e filologia. Sulle vulgate di alcuni pellegrinaggi tre- e quattrocenteschi (Leonardo Frescobaldi, Mariano da Siena, Alessandro Rinuccini) e sulle guide di Terrasanta”, *Filologia italiana*, iii (2006), pp. 31–76.

TSAFRIR 1993a – *Ancient Churches Revealed*, Yoram Tsafrir ed., Jerusalem 1993.

TSAFRIR 1993b – Yoram Tsafrir, “The Development of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Palestine”, in Tsafrir 1993a, pp. 1–16.

TSAFRIR 2000 – Yoram Tsafrir, “Procopius and the Nea Church in Jerusalem”, *Antiquité tardive*, viii (2000), pp. 149–164.

TURNER 1979 – Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House. The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship*, The Hague 1979.

TZAFERIS 1975 – Vassilios Tzaferis, “The Archaeological Excavation at Shepherds’ Field”, *Liber Annuus*, xxv (1975), pp. 5–52.

TZAFERIS 1981 – Vassilios Tzaferis, “The Wall Mosaics in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem”, in *Actes du xve Congrès international d’études byzantines*. Athènes, septembre 1976, Athens 1981, vol. ii, pp. 891–900.

UHDE-STAHl 1977 – Brigitte Uhde-Stahl, “La chapelle circulaire de Saint-Michel-de-Cuxà”, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, xx (1977), pp. 339–351.

UNTERMANN 1989 – Matthias Untermann, *Der Zentralbau im Mittelalter*, Darmstadt 1989.

VASSILAKI 1997a – Maria Vassilaki, *Το πορτραίτο του καλλιτέχνη στο Βυζάντιο*, Maria Vassilaki ed., Iraklion 1997.

VASSILAKI 1997b – Maria Vassilaki, “Ἀπὸ τὸν ‘ἀνώνυμο’ Βυζαντινὸ καλλιτέχνη στον ‘ἐπώνυμο’ Κρητικὸ ζωγράφου τοῦ 15^{ου} αἰῶνα”, in Vassilaki 1997a, pp. 161–172.

VASSILAKI 2000 – *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, exhibition catalogue (Athens, Benaki Museum, 20 October 2000 – 20 January 2001), Maria Vassilaki ed., Milan/Athens 2000.

VAUCHEZ 2013 – André Vauchez, “La Custodie franciscaine de Terre Sainte et les puissances politiques européennes”, in Degout/Charles-Gaffiot 2013, pp. 46–53.

VERSTEGEN 2013 – Ute Verstegen, *Heiliger Ort – sakraler Raum. Kontinuität und Wandel in der Inszenierung der Herrenorte in Jerusalem*, Habilitation thesis (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Erlangen/Nürnberg 2013), unpublished.

VERSTEGEN 2015 – Ute Verstegen, “Die architektonische Inszenierung der christlichen Erinnerungsorte im Heiligen Land. Architektursemantische Beobachtungen zu einem konstantinischen

Innovationskonzept”, *In Situ. Zeitschrift für Architekturgeschichte*, vii (2015), pp. 151–170.

VİKAN 2010 – Gary Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Washington, D.C. 2010.

VINCENT 1911 – Hugues Vincent, “L’église de l’Éleona”, *Revue Biblique*, viii (1911), pp. 219–265.

VINCENT 1920 – Hugues Vincent, “Chronique. La restauration de l’Éleona”, *Revue Biblique*, xxix (1920), pp. 267–269.

VINCENT 1935 – Hugues Vincent, “La basilique de la Nativité à Bethléem d’après les fouilles récentes”, *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, lxxix/3 (1935), pp. 350–361.

VINCENT 1936 – Hugues Vincent, “Bethléem. Le Sanctuaire de la Nativité d’après les fouilles récentes”, *Revue biblique*, xlv (1936), pp. 544–574.

VINCENT 1937 – Hugues Vincent, “Bethléem. Le sanctuaire de la Nativité d’après les fouilles récentes”, *Revue biblique*, xlv (1937), pp. 93–121.

VINCENT 1948 – Hugues Vincent, “La basilique de la Nativité à Bethléem”, in *Atti del IV Congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana. Città del Vaticano, 16–22 ottobre 1938, Vatican City 1940–1948*, vol. ii, pp. 65–88.

VINCENT 1957 – Hugues Vincent, “L’Éleona, sanctuaire primitif de l’Ascension”, *Revue Biblique*, lxiv (1957), pp. 48–71.

VINCENT/ABEL 1912–1926 – Hugues Vincent, Félix-Marie Abel, *Jérusalem: Recherches de topographie, d’archéologie et d’histoire*, Paris 1912–1926.

VINCENT/ABEL 1914 – Hugues Vincent, Félix-Marie Abel, *Bethléem. Le sanctuaire de la Nativité*, Paris 1914.

VINGOPOULOU 2004 – Ioli Vingopoulou, *Le monde grec vu par les voyageurs du xvie siècle*, Athens 2004.

VIONNET 1938 – Mamert Vionnet, “Les églises de la Nativité à Bethléem”, *Byzantion*, xiii (1938), pp. 91–128.

WACHTSMUTH 1930 – Friedrich Wachtsmuth, “Der Grundriss der Elisabethkirche in Marburg”, *Hessenland*, xli (1930), pp. 201–206.

WALKER 1990 – Peter W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century*, Oxford 1990.

WALTER 1970 – Christopher Walter, *L’iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine*, Paris 1970.

WALTER 1974 – Christopher Walter, “La place des évêques dans le décor des absides byzantines”, *Revue de l’art*, xxiv (1974), pp. 81–89.

WALTER 1982 – Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, London 1982.

WARDI 1975 – Chaim Wardi, “The Question of the Holy Places in Ottoman Times”, in *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period*, Moshe Ma’oz ed., Jerusalem 1975, pp. 385–393.

WATSON 1934 – Arthur Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, London 1934.

WATZINGER 1933–1935 – Carl Watzinger, *Denkmäler Palästinas. Eine Einführung in die Archäologie des Heiligen Landes*, Leipzig 1933–1935.

WEBER 2014 – Winfried Weber, “Überlegungen zur Rekonstruktion der konstantinischen Geburtskirche in Bethlehem”, *Antiquité tardive*, xxii (2014), pp. 105–110.

WEIGAND 1911 – Edmund Weigand, *Die Geburtskirche von Bethlehem. Eine Untersuchung zur christlichen Antike*, Leipzig 1911.

WEIGAND 1914–1919 – Edmund Weigand, “Das Theodosioskloster. Zur kunstgeschichtlichen Stellung Palästinas vom 4.–7. Jh.”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xxiii (1914–1919), pp. 167–216.

WEIGAND 1915 – Edmund Weigand, “Die konstantinische Geburtskirche von Bethlehem”, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, xxxviii (1915), pp. 89–135.

WEIGAND 1923 – Edmund Weigand, “Nochmals die konstantinische Geburt-

skirche in Bethlehem und die Eleonakirche in Jerusalem”, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, XLVI (1923), pp. 193–220.

WEILAND 1998 – Albrecht Weiland, “Die Kapitelle der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem”, *Acta XIII congressus internationalis archaeologiae Christianae. Split-Poreč (25.9. – 1.10.1994). Pars III*, Nenad Cambi and Emilio Marin eds, Vatican City 1998, pp. 813–827.

WEILL-ROCHANT 1997 – Catherine Weill-Rochant, “Histoire et évolution urbaine”, in Revault, Santelli and Weill Rochant 1997, pp. 7–30.

WEIR SCHULTZ 1910 – *The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem*, Robert Weir Schultz ed., London 1910.

WEITZMANN 1974 – Kurt Weitzmann, “Loca sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXVIII (1974), pp. 31–55.

WELTEN 1983 – Peter Welten, “Bethlehem und die Klage um Adonis”, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, IC (1983), pp. 189–203.

WEYL CARR 1982 – Annemarie Weyl Carr, “The Mural Paintings of Abu Ghosh and the Patronage of Manuel Comnenus in the Holy Land”, in Folda 1982, pp. 215–243.

WHITBY 1985 – Michael Whitby, “Justinian’s Bridge over the Sangarius and the Date

of Procopius’ *De Aedificiis*”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, CV (1985), pp. 129–148.

WILKEN 1992 – Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy. Palestine in Christian Theory and Thought*, New Haven/London 1992.

WILLIAMS 1993 – Peter Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture, 750–1250*, Cambridge 1993.

WOLIŃSKA/FILIPCZAK 2015 – Teresa Wolińska, Paweł Filipczak, *Byzantium and the Arabs. The Encounter of Civilizations from Sixth to Mid-Eighth Century*, Łódź 2015.

XYNGOPOULOS 1960–1961 – Andreas Xyngopoulos, “Αἱ παραστάσεις τοῦ ἑκατοντάρχου Λογγίνου καὶ τῶν μετ’αὐτοῦ μαρτυρουσάντων ἀγίων”, *Ἑπετηρίς τῆς Ἑταιρείας βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν*, XXX (1960–1961), pp. 54–84.

YASIN 2009 – Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean. Architecture, Cult, and Community*, Cambridge 2009.

YOTA 2010 – Elisabeth Yota, “La représentativité de la réalité architecturale dans l’art byzantin”, *Iconographica*, IX (2010), pp. 11–25.

ZVALLART 1595 – Jan Zvallart, *Il devotissimo viaggio di Gierusalemme fatto e descritto in sei libri dal signor Giovanni Zuallardo, cavaliere del Santissimo Sepolcro di N. S. l’anno MDLXXXVI*, Rome 1595.



INDEX OF NAMES

A

Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As, 98
 'Abd al-Malik (caliph), 101
 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan, 146
 Abdūlmecid I (Ottoman sultan), 7, 255
 Abel, Félix-Marie, 138
 Abraham (Armenian priest), 209
 Abraham (patriarch), 154, 182, 184
 Abu'l-Qāsim 'Alī (vizir), 146
 Achim, 181
 Adamnán of Iona (monk), 55, 89, 90
 Adémar of Chabannes
 (chronicler), 106
 Adonis, 32, 38
 Adorno, Anselmo (pilgrim), 231
 al-Bāqir (imām), 101
 Albéric of Trois-Fontaines
 (chronicler), 210
 Alessandri, Claudio, 13n15
 Alexander III (pope), 168
 al-Hakim (Fatimid caliph), 65n18, 107
 al-Harawī (dervish), 100, 124, 171
 al-Istakhri (historian), 98
 al-Kamil (Ayyubid sultan), 210
 al-Malik al- Mu'azzam (Ayyubid ruler
 of Syria), 209
 al-Maqdisi (historian), 98
 al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun
 (Mamluk sultan), 223
 al-Ẓāhir (Fatimid caliph), 146
 Amalric I (king of Jerusalem), 138–140,
 142, 143
 Amico, Bernardino (friar), 71, 117,
 227, 242
 Amos (prophet), 182
 Anna (saint), 185, 190
 Anthony (saint), 135
 Aphrodite, 32
 Arakel (Armenian priest), 209
 Aristenos, Alexios, 170
 Arnolfo di Cambio (sculptor), 103, 220
 Arsenios (pilgrim), 119n21
 Augustine (saint), 115
 Aupick, Jacques (French general), 255
 Azor, 181

B

Bagatti, Bellarmino, 10, 11n9, 45n57
 Balaam (prophet), 182
 Baldwin I (king of Jerusalem), 114, 115
 Baldwin II (king of Jerusalem), 113, 115
 Baldwin III (king of Jerusalem), 140
 Baldwin of Boulogne see Baldwin I
 Baldwin of Bourcq see Baldwin II
 Baouardy Haddam, Mariam (nun), 270
 Bar Kokhba, Simon, 27, 32
 Basil (painter), 147–151, 194, 195; 37
 Basil of Caesarea, 127, 128; 32
 Basilus see Basil
 Baybars (sultan), 214
 Benedict Roza (Milanese nobleman), 106
 Benjamin (son of Rachel), 53
 Bernhard the Monk (pilgrim), 80, 83n68, 84, 203
 Birgitta of Sweden (saint), 233–235, 244, 256
 Bordeaux anonymous (pilgrim), 35
 Breydy, Michel, 99n116
 Burchard of Mount Sion (pilgrim), 214
 Burton, Nathanael (priest), 251

C

Catherine (saint), 117, 203, 218, 227, 244
 Celsus (philosopher), 30
 Cennini, Cennino, 137n60
 Charlemagne, 65, 102, 169
 Choricus (orator), 202
 Ciampini, Giovanni, 153, 179, 181; 38
 Claudius (emperor), 158
 Concina, Elisabetta, 16
 Constantine (Roman emperor), 10, 26, 34,
 35n26, 36, 38, 39n40, 40, 42, 44, 46, 51n68, 81,
 141, 153, 190, 224, 265, 272
 Cyprian (saint), 170
 Cyril of Jerusalem, 32, 38
 Cyril of Scythopolis, 61, 62, 66, 67

D

Daimbert of Pisa (patriarch),
 114, 168
 Daniel (prophet), 107
 Daniel the Higoumen (pilgrim), 86, 116,
 124, 171, 202

David (king of Israel), 27, 28, 33, 53, 54, 86,
 115, 154, 182, 184
 David IV (king of Georgia), 137
 Decius (Roman emperor), 32
 Diocletian (Roman emperor), 73
 Dionysios (Greek bishop of Bethlehem), 256
 Dositheos II (patriarch of Jerusalem), 245,
 246, 249, 258

E

Egeria (pilgrim), 46, 52, 53
 Eleazar (priest), 181; 53
 Elihud, 181; 53
 Elijah (prophet), 135, 187, 225
 Ephraim (mosaicist), 138, 139, 144, 145, 147,
 150–152, 176, 193, 195
 Epiphanius of Constantinople, 87, 91
 Eritrean Sybil, 182
 Escobar Cabeza de Vaca, Pedro (pilgrim),
 189, 190
 Estourmel, Joseph d' (count), 252
 Etherianus, Hugo (theologian), 140
 Eusebius (saint), 230, 231n70
 Eusebius of Caesarea, 27n6, 34–36, 52, 53, 82
 Eustochium (saint), 124, 125n38, 216,
 222, 225, 230
 Euthymius the Great (saint), 135
 Eutychius of Alexandria (patriarch), 60–63,
 66, 67, 92, 96–99, 101
 Ezekiel (prophet), 182

F

Francis of Assisi, 224
 Frederic II (Holy Roman emperor), 210
 Fulcus Nerra (Count of Anjou), 107

G

Geoffrey of Bouillon, 114, 115
 George (saint), 128
 Gerhoh of Reichersberg (theologian), 168
 Germanus of Constantinople (patriarch), 83
 Gerold of Jerusalem (patriarch), 210
 Giovanni Romano (Latin bishop
 of Bethlehem), 213
 Godfrey de Prefectis (Papal legate), 213

Gregory of Nazianzus (saint), 127, 129; 32, 48
 Gregory of Tours, 86–88
 Guylford, Richard (pilgrim), 202

H

Habakkuk (prophet), 28
 Hadrian (Roman emperor), 27, 32
 Hadrian IV (pope), 168
 Hamilton, Robert William, 258
 Harvey, William, 9, 258
 Hegesippus (early Christian writer), 216
 Helena (Roman empress), 34–37, 46, 92, 190
 Helpidius (heretic), 89
 Herod, 37, 226
 Het'um I (Het'own) of Cilicia (king), 209
 Honorius III (pope), 213
 Hubert Walther of Salisbury (bishop), 210
 Hunt, Lucy-Anne, 149n99
 Hyacinth (pilgrim), 64, 69n32, 73n43, 78, 80,
 85, 88, 92, 113n1, 121

I

Ibn 'Atiyya (scholar), 98
 Ibn al-Murajjā (scholar), 109
 Ibn Iṣāq (scholar), 97
 Ibn Kabar (scholar), 169
 Ibn Khaldūn (philosopher), 143
 Isaac II Angelos (Byzantine emperor), 209
 Isaiah (prophet), 28, 29, 182
 Jacob (patriarch), 53, 181
 James of Kokkinovaphos (monk), 162
 James of Verona (pilgrim), 214

J

James the Great (saint), 130, 132, 187
 James the Less (saint), 188
 Jerome (saint), 31, 32, 36, 37, 40, 55, 89, 103,
 123, 125n38, 220, 222, 225, 230, 232
 Jesse, 53, 182, 183, 253
 Joachim (Mary's father), 185, 190
 João de Jesus Christo (friar), 269
 Joel (prophet), 182
 John Chrysostom, 83
 John Komnenos (Byzantine emperor), 170
 John of Damascus, 84

John Phokas (pilgrim), 120, 141, 143, 144, 152, 201, 202
 John the Baptist, 63, 127, 141, 229, 248
 John the Evangelist, 172, 28, 245
 John the Hesychast (saint), 66
 Joseph (saint) 27, 28, 33, 37, 128, 182, 200, 219, 225, 234, 244, 256, 269; 33
 Joseph of Arimathea, 124
 Justin II (Byzantine emperor), 69
 Justin Martyr (saint), 26, 27, 29, 30, 33
 Justinian (Byzantine emperor), 40, 59–63, 66–71, 73, 74, 117, 141, 265

K

Kardus, Abdullah Effendi (official), 7
 Khusraw II (Sasanian king), 92, 95
 Krautheimer, Richard, 69
 Kühnel, Gustav, 9, 15, 134, 151

L

Laborde, Léon de (archaeologist and politician), 253n149
 Longinus (saint), 189
 Ludolf of Südheim (pilgrim), 218
 Luke (evangelist), 22, 28, 31, 36, 181, 202, 212, 251

M

Macarius (saint), 135
 MacMahon, Patrice de (president of France), 257
 Magi, 37, 42, 83, 85–88, 91–93, 95, 121, 184, 200, 202, 203, 215, 221, 225, 228, 229, 231, 250, 252, 269; 24, 79
 Mahmud II (Ottoman sultan), 252
 Manolakis Kastorianos (merchant), 245
 Manuel I Komnenos (Byzantine emperor), 135, 138–141, 143, 151, 152, 165, 171
 Mariano of Siena (pilgrim), 236
 Mariti, Giovanni, 253
 Mary of Antioch, 140
 Matthan, 181
 Matthew (evangelist), 22, 28, 86, 107, 181, 251
 Meinwerk (bishop), 104
 Melisende (queen), 147, 197
 Melisende of Tripoli, 140
 Micah (prophet), 27, 30, 182
 Michael of Damietta (bishop), 169

Moses, 187
 Mother of God see Virgin Mary
 Muhammad, 96, 98, 242, 271
 Muqātil ibn Sulayman, 109

N

Nahum (prophet), 182
 Nau, Michel (jesuit), 61n4
 Nazir-i Khusraw (traveler), 108, 109
 Nektarios (Greek patriarch of Jerusalem), 245
 Nerses III Tayetsi (katholikos of Armenia), 70
 Niccolò da Poggibonsi (pilgrim), 118, 180, 222
 Nicephorus (patriarch of Jerusalem), 107
 Nicholas (saint), 125, 256
 Nicholas I (tsar), 255
 Nicholas IV (pope), 103, 220
 Nicodemus, 212
 Novatian (antipope), 170
 Nur ad-Din (ruler of Syria), 140

O

Ogier d'Anglure (pilgrim), 219
 Olaf (saint), 130, 133
 Oliba (Catalan abbot), 104
 Onuphrius (saint), 135
 Origen (theologian), 30–33, 38
 Oshri, Aviram, 28
 Osman III (Ottoman sultan), 249

P

Palladas, Jeremias (painter), 244
 Palma il Giovane (painter), 231
 Paronter, Grigor (Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem), 247
 Paschal II (pope), 115
 Paul (saint), 26, 83
 Paula (saint), 36, 55, 123, 125n38, 216, 222, 225, 230
 Peter (saint), 128, 187; 54
 Philip of Savona (friar), 216, 226
 Piacenza anonymous (pilgrim), 54, 55, 67
 Pius IX (pope), 254
 Procopius of Caesarea (historian), 62, 63, 66, 67, 73

Q

Quaresmi, Francesco (theologian), 11, 120, 149, 153, 182, 184, 185, 189, 190, 249

R

Rachel (wife of Jacob), 33, 53, 225
 Ralph (bishop of Bethlehem), 138, 139, 142, 143, 151, 168
 Ralph of Coggeshall (historian), 179
 Ralph of Couhé (bishop), 106
 Raoul see Ralph (Latin bishop of Bethlehem)
 Raynerius (Latin bishop of Bethlehem), 212
 Reboldi, Antonio de' (pilgrim), 21, 22
 Ricoldo da Montecroce (pilgrim), 221
 Robert of Naples (king), 223
 Roberts, David, 251n135, 253n149

S

Sabas (saint), 60–62, 135
 Sabinianus (deacon), 40
 Saewulf (pilgrim), 116, 232
 Saladin (sultan), 130, 207–210, 212, 267
 Salome (nurse of Jesus), 200
 Samuel (prophet), 27, 86
 Severus of Antioch (patriarch), 170
 Simeon (saint), 243
 Šnorhali, Nerses (katholikos of Cilicia), 141
 Solomon (king of Israel), 53
 Sophronius (patriarch of Jerusalem), 68, 74, 78, 84, 96
 Stephen (saint), 128, 129, 135
 Storrs, Ronald (British governor of Palestine), 257
 Suger (abbot of Saint-Denis), 182
 Suleyman the Magnificent (Ottoman sultan), 239
 Suriano, Francesco (Franciscan custodian of the Holy Land), 203
 Sylvester I (pope), 224

T

Tammsuz see Adonis
 Tancred of Hauteville, 113, 114
 Taylor, Joan, 32
 Tamar (queen of Georgia), 209
 Theoderic (pilgrim), 124, 185, 220, 223n45, 229, 230
 Theodora (Byzantine empress), 63
 Theodora (niece of Manuel I Komnenos), 140
 Theodore I (pope), 103
 Theodore Stratilates (saint), 128; 34
 Theodosius (saint), 180
 Theodosius II (Eastern Roman emperor), 179

Theodosius the Cenobiarch (saint), 135
 Theophanes III (Greek patriarch of Jerusalem), 243
 Theophilus (Byzantine emperor), 92
 Theophilus Presbyter, 211
 Thomas (saint), 175, 190, 191, 211, 212; 57
 Tomacelli, Giovanni (Father Guardian of Bethlehem), 239
 Trdat III (king of Armenia), 238
 Tzowers, Wilhelm (pilgrim), 241

U

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (caliph), 96–100, 125, 171, 184, 271
 Ursula (saint), 203

V

Vasileios (painter), 245
 Victor IV (pope), 168
 Vincent (saint), 135
 Vionnet, Mamert, 38
 Virgin Mary, 27, 28, 30, 33, 36, 37, 52, 53, 86, 87, 91–93, 97, 104, 108, 109, 121, 127, 128, 130, 131, 133, 134, 150, 154, 155, 183–185, 193, 200–203, 212, 214, 217–219, 222, 223, 225, 228, 231–234, 245, 252, 256, 257, 269; 33, 36

W

Weigand, Edmund, 10
 Werro, Sebastian (pilgrim), 71
 Willibald (saint), 84
 Wino of Helmarshausen (abbot), 104

Y

Yaʿqut (historian), 100, 124, 171
 Yahya ibn Saʿīd (historian), 107

Z

Zadok, 181
 Zechariah (priest), 109
 Zelome (nurse of Jesus), 200
 Zeno (Eastern Roman emperor), 60
 Zeus, 30
 Zvallart, Jean (pilgrim), 240
 Zvar Jiyerji (pilgrim), 249

INDEX OF PLACES

A

Acre, 208, 212, 213
 Aelia Capitolina see Jerusalem
 'Ain Karim, 229
 Al-'Andalus, 151
 Aleppo, 257
 Alexandria, 60, 62, 99
 Ancyra, 170
 Anjou, 107
 Antioch, 51, 140, 170, 176, 179; 44
 Ascalon, 115, 142
 'Atlit, 136

B

Beit Sahour, 52, 219, 237
 – Field of the Shepherds (*Poimnion*), 52, 54, 82, 86, 219
 – Kanisat ar-Ra'wat ("the Shepherd's church"), 52
 – Khirbet Siyar el-Ghanam ("the ruin of the sheep cote"), 52
 – Church of the Angels, 225 see also Beit Sahour, Field of the Shepherds
 Berlin, 7, 256
 Bethany, Church of Saint Lazarus, 49
 Bethlehem
 – Anatreh (quarter), 237
 – Armenian monastery, 16, 71, 117, 270, 271; 15
 – Chapel of Saint John the Baptist, 248
 – Church of the Mother of God, 247
 – School of Saint Jerome, 71, 117, 237, 248; 15
 – Casanova hostel, 211
 – Church of Saint Nicholas, 225
 – Franciscan convent, 16, 211, 227, 230, 240, 271; 27, 67, 68
 – Chapel of Saint Catherine, 117, 227, 228, 238, 244, 249; 67
 – Greek monastery of Saint Nicholas, 16, 216
 – King David's church, 55
 – King David's Wells, 86
 – Lutheran Christmas Church, 270
 – Manger Square, 34, 40, 71, 237, 271; 80
 – Manger Street, 86

– Milk grotto, 219, 223, 225; 69
 – Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, 63
 – Mosque of 'Umar, 271; 80
 – Nativity church
 – Armenian chapel, 8
 – Cave of the Holy Innocents, 82, 85, 223, 225–228, 230, 244, 248
 – Cave of Saint Jerome, 225, 228, 230
 – Cave of Saint Joseph, 244
 – Chapel of the bell tower, 126; 31–34
 – Chapel of Saint Nicholas, 256
 – Greek chapel of Saint George, 120, 242, 245, 256
 – Nativity cave, 23, 31, 32, 36, 37, 40–42, 83, 84, 90, 91, 92, 122, 200, 203, 214, 221, 225, 228, 229, 230, 231, 236, 237, 241, 244, 248, 250–252; 7, 8, 71
 – Well of the Star, 89n85, 120, 121, 228, 231, 232, 237, 244; 28
 – Palestine Peace Centre, 40
 – Paul VI Street, 271
 – Rachel's tomb, 33, 53, 225
 – Salesian school, 270
 – Temple of Adonis, 38
 Bethlehem, surroundings
 – Mar Elias monastery, 135, 141, 142, 152, 222
 – Tantur Institute, 73, 222
 Burgundy, 239

C

Caesarea Maritima, 30, 34, 67
 Cairo, 209, 214
 – Matariyya garden, 218
 Cambridge, 162
 Cappadocia, 79
 Carthage, 170
 Chios, 245
 Clamecy, 116
 Cologne, Sankt Maria im Kapitol, 104
 Constantinople, 60, 74, 140, 141, 151, 165, 168, 169, 171, 194, 195, 212, 220, 242, 245, 255
 – Church of Our Lady of Blachernae, 70
 – Hagia Sophia, 137

Crete, 70, 79
 Crimea, 256
 Cythera (island), 144

D

Damascus, 209, 218
 Danube (river), 256
 Dvin, Cathedral, 70

E

East Lothian, 116

F

Ferrières-sur-Gâtinais, Benedictine abbey, 103
 – Church of Saint-Pierre, 104
 Frankfurt, 169
 Fribourg, University of Fribourg, 13n14

G

Galilee, 28
 Gangra, 170
 Gaza, Cathedral, 202
 Gelati, monastery church, 137, 163; 45
 Gortyna (Crete), church of Saint Titus, 70

H

Hebron, 53
 Holy Land, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 23, 28, 33, 35, 37, 39, 46, 49, 51, 60–62, 66–68, 73, 78, 86, 87, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 98, 99, 102, 103, 105–107, 109, 114, 120, 136, 139–142, 144, 148, 161, 168, 171, 176, 180, 191, 197, 203, 208, 209, 216, 218, 220, 223, 224, 235, 238, 242, 243, 253, 254, 257, 269
 Hromkla, 141

I

Istanbul, 246 see also Constantinople
 Jerusalem, 27, 33, 34, 39, 52, 53, 66, 68, 73, 74, 78, 79, 95, 96, 98, 100, 106–109, 114, 115, 118, 135, 138–140, 142, 146, 148, 151, 159, 161, 168, 175, 176, 180, 185, 187, 188, 193, 200, 208, 238, 241–243, 246, 249, 254, 257, 259; 55, 56
 – Al-Aqsa Mosque, 96, 146, 161, 176; 51
 – Anastasis Rotunda see Jerusalem, Holy Sepulchre

– Cardo maximus, 74
 – Dome of the Chain, 188
 – Dome of the Rock, 101, 159, 161, 172, 173n135, 175, 176, 188, 239; 42 see also Jerusalem, *Templum Domini*
 – Eleona church, 35, 39, 42, 43n55
 – Gethsemane, 189
 – Haram eš-Šarif see Jerusalem, Temple Mount
 – Holy Sepulchre, 14, 32, 35, 42, 43n50, 43n54, 61, 65n18, 83, 96, 99, 104, 106, 107, 141, 148, 161, 183, 187, 252, 269
 – Golgotha Chapel, 190
 – Rock of Golgotha, 35, 42, 79, 219
 – Jewish Temple, 96
 – Lord's Temple see Jerusalem, *Templum Domini*
 – *Martyrium* Basilica, 39, 42, 107 see also Jerusalem, Holy Sepulchre
 – Mosque of 'Umar, 99n115
 – Mount Golgotha, 179
 – Mount of Olives, 35, 43n55
 – Mount Zion, 224
 – Museum of the Greek Patriarchate, 197
 – Museum of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 211
 – Nea church, 61, 67, 68, 73, 74
 – Solomon's palace (*Palatium Salomonis*) see Jerusalem, al-Aqsa Mosque
 – Syrian Orthodox cathedral, 148
 – Temple Mount, 34, 96–98, 108, 109, 210, 232
 – *Templum Domini*, 161, 172, 183, 187, 188, 226 see also Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock
 – Tomb of Mary, 148

J

Jordan (river), 141
 Judaea, 27, 28, 60
 Judean Desert, 62, 135

K

Kartmin (Tur 'Abdin region), Mor Gabriel monastery, 173, 174; 47
 Kastoria, 245

Kathisma (the “seat” of Mary), 33, 45, 52, 54, 102
Khirbet Samara, Samaritan synagogue, 49
Kiev, 151
Kütahya (Turkey), 250

L

Laodicea, 170
Limoges, 211
London, British Museum, 93
Lydda, Saint George, 106

M

Madaba (Jordan), church of Saint George, 59; 14
Mambre, 33
Mar Saba monastery, 62, 66, 141, 171, 225, 255
Marburg, Elisabethkirche, 105
Mecca, 99, 151, 184, 265
– H̱aram Mosque, 147
Medina, 151
Mesopotamia, 215
Milan, 104, 106
– Church of San Sepolcro, 105
Montmusard, 208
Monza, Cathedral, 93; 24
Mopsuestia, 142
Mount Gerizim (Nablus), 60
Mount Nebo, 49
Mount Sinai, Saint Catherine’s monastery,
62, 106, 210, 218, 227

N

Nablus, 29, 60
Nazareth, 27, 168
Neapolis see Nablus
Neocaesarea, 170
Nicaea, 164, 169, 170

P

Paderborn, Busdorkirche, 104
Palermo, Cappella Palatina, 151, 195
Palestine see Holy Land
Paris, 7, 169, 256
Piacenza, 41, 54, 55, 67
Piedmont, 256
Pools of Solomon, 34
Pyrenees, 104
Rantis, 124

R

Ravenna, Baptistry of the Orthodox, 173
Rome, 45, 122, 154, 162, 165, 168, 169, 220
– *Ecclesia Salvatoris*, 46
– Saint Peter, 46, 69n33
– Sancta Maria ad praesepe see Rome, Santa
Maria Maggiore
– Santa Maria Maggiore, 45, 103, 104, 220
– Santa Pudenziana, 45; 9

S

Sacro Monte di Varallo (Lombardy), Cappella
della Natività, 235; 72
Saidnaya, (Syria), 210, 218
Saint-Denis, 182
Saint John the Baptist’s monastery (on the
river Jordan), 141
Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, abbey church
– Chapel of Our Lady of the Crib, 104; 25
– Chapel of the Holy Trinity, 104
Salento, 144
Santiago de Compostela, 130, 133
Sens, 103
Serdica, 170, 175, 176; 46
Shiloh, 49
Sicily, 151, 154
Sinai see Mount Sinai
Split, Diocletian’s palace, 73
Syria, 78, 99, 102, 140, 210

T

Tebessa, 69n36
Thessaloniki, 169
– Rotunda, 173
Tyre, 142

V

Vatican City, Vatican Library, 162
Veneto, 240
Venice, 151
– San Marco, 154
Versailles, 7, 256
Vienna, 249

PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

Figs 1, 2, 4–13, 15–23, 25–42, 44–46, 49–70, 73, 75–81, © Michele Bacci

Figs 3, 14, Archive of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem

Fig. 24, © Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza / photo by Piero Pozzi

Fig. 4, © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Fig. 47, Alexandre Varela, Fribourg

Fig. 48, After Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, K. Manafis ed., Athens 1990

Fig. 71, © Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire, Fribourg (Suisse)

Fig. 72, Mario Parietti, Luino

Fig. 74, American Colony in Jerusalem / Library of Congress

